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MOVIES



NO. 18

CULT MOVIES

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Deep Inside Cult Movies

by Michael Copner,
Editor-in-Chief

Perhaps by now this news will be old, or there will be a different resolution to the matter. But the front page of the May 11, 1996 *New York Times* carries a truly amazing story. Under a triple-barreled headline filled with excuses, the report states that after three months of debate, the Clinton Administration has decided not to punish China for their sale to Pakistan of nuclear equipment used for the production of weapons-grade enriched uranium. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, acting for the administration, decided he had "no hard evidence" to contradict repeated Chinese assertions that "the Government of China was unaware of any transfers" of the equipment. American officials do say they know the particular Chinese company that sold the equipment to Pakistan.

The article indicates that the Clinton administration decided not to impose sanctions because the Chinese promised not to make such transfers in the future — even though they do not admit to making this transfer (try not paying your parking ticket with such a promise).

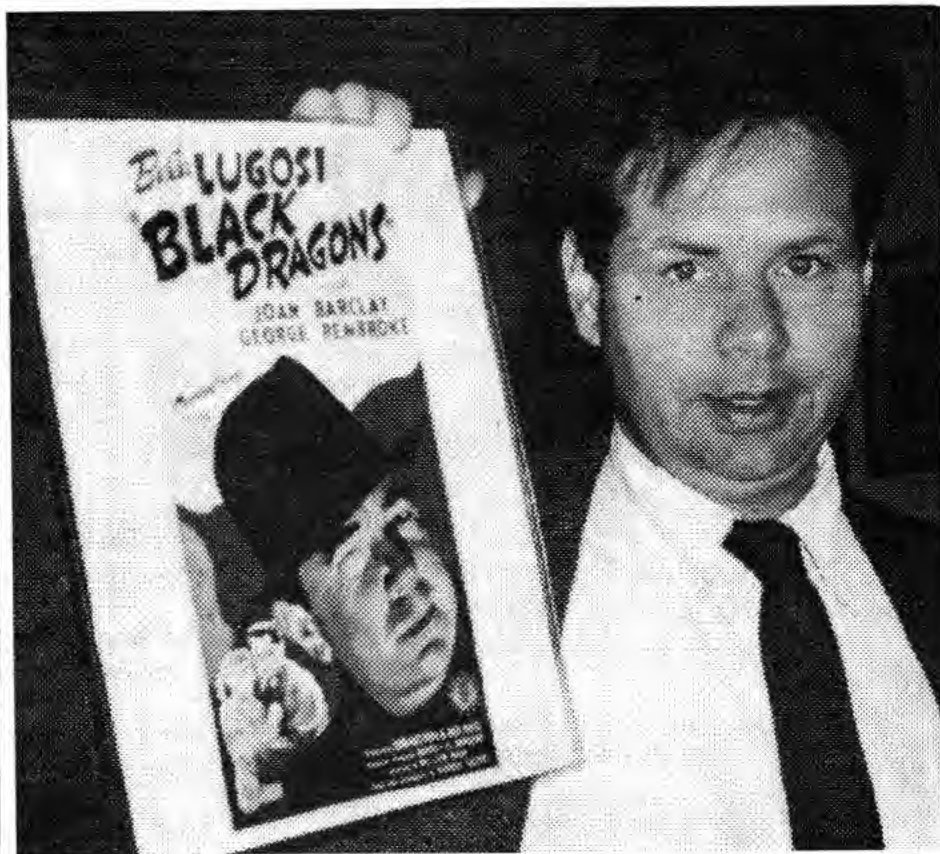
The punch line at the end of the story is a "separate issue concerning trade practices," wherein the Administration announced that it would impose about \$2 billion in economic sanctions against certain Chinese products unless China lived up to promises made (but not kept) last year to stop producing pirated copies of copyrighted American software, music compact discs and videotapes.

Got that? You want to trade in nuclear weapons, okay. No sanctions, no problems. But start making bootleg copies of Uncle Sam's movies, tunes and computer wizardry; then you'll find out what wrath really is!

Such mad hatter priorities can be peculiarly reassuring to certain baby-boomers who have grown up insecure about their love of monsters, superheroes, or pie-in-the-face comedy. If one's early years were influenced by "seduction of the innocent" theology, you grew up knowing very well that Superman TV shows, rock and roll music, The Three Stooges, and horror comics & films were entirely wrong food for fresh, helpless, non-discriminating young minds. The stuff was sinful and dangerous at its most effective; at the very least it was merely a trashy, puerile, valueless way of wasting one's attention span.

If the whole damn generation grew up neurotic, is it any wonder? Spoon-feeding a nation's school kids on duck-and-cover drills and letting them know that any day now they're going to die might not be a formula for disassociation and apathy by itself. But tell 'em Batman and The Three Stooges are inherently evil and — well — do they wonder why most Americans under 40 don't care to vote anymore?

But what if the whole thing was a subterfuge? A smokescreen put up to hide a bigger issue? I was one of those kids who had his stash of *Famous Monsters* magazines burned by righteous parents. In fact, every popular-culture interest I had at the time was deemed to be devoid of worth, the kind of rubbish that interferes with one's concern for and participation in the important truths in life; truths



World War III will be fought over pop culture trivia such as this.

such as the cold war. But just wait 30 years and see what happens? Every now and then a different kind of truth sneaks through and gives a hint as to the reality behind the scenes. Such as, for example, the truth revealed in that certain New York Times report.

Think about it! A retaliation of Two Billion Dollars in sanctions is a whopping big retaliation over (in part) music and movies. See where the real worth and value is? Perhaps the coming nuclear war won't be about barrels of oil, but rather about bootleg copies of Freddy Krueger and Madonna.

Pick a relevant catch-phrase and put that on your bumper sticker. "Trivia Is Important," could be a winner. Or, "Who Controls The Media, Controls The Money, Controls The World," would work. I'd like it to be, "Monsters are good for my children." But you can decide on a truth; any one will do.

But enough of gloom and doomsday. We intend to keep cranking out cultish fun and entertainment until that mushroom cloud envelopes us all. It's a true pleasure to announce our plan for the next issue of *Cult Movies*.

Our hero, Santa Claus to several generations of film fans, Forrest J. Ackerman will be beaming aboard our magazine and convert half of it to his own sensational specialty, Science-Fiction. You may remember that in 1961, 45J edited the first issue of *Spacemen Magazine*, dedicated to every kind of futuristic cinema. Of course, this was in the days before *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Star Gate*, and even 2001. Nevertheless, it was an enthralling space trip for all of its five year mission. Now, as we near the

new century, and the predictions of *Metropolis* have nearly all become reality, Mr. Sci-Fi feels it's time to revive this vital, thought provoking forum. Thus our next issue will be another 50/50 magazine, after the style of our George Reeves zine a few issues back. You'll receive the usual *Cult Movies Mag* on one side; flip it over and (at no extra cost!) you'll have a complete issue of the all new *Spacemen*, under the complete editorship of Forry. This project is experimental in nature; should it meet with enthusiasm and critical approval, we'd very much enjoy reviving *Spacemen* as our second title, with Forry creating a complete issue six or eight times per year. Be looking for our big 19th issue of *Cult Movies*, on the stands in September.

Also planned for our next issue is the return of fantastic film authority Frank Dello Stritto with another mind-expanding essay on speculative cinema of the 1930s and '40s.

If you enjoy our Steve Reeves interview this time, you'll love our continued coverage of Samson, Goliath and all the 1960s Italian muscle epics; next issue we'll feature a Hercules filmography. We'll have articles on Orson Welles, Buster Keaton, Karloff, Cold War Television, and Japan's new Mothra epic. Filmmaker Titus Moody becomes a full-time *Cult Movies* columnist with his *Intimate Interviews* with his old friends, adult stars Kay Parker and Seka. Plus a behind-the-scenes look at Sandra Bernhard on her USA Cable-TV show, *Reel Wild Cinema*, and — well, that's enough of a preview. On with this exciting show!

Hope you like our zine; stay tuned for thrills!!! ■

Letters

Hey, your last issue was great! We need more non-mainstream movie mags such as yours that are dizzily eclectic, entertaining and very well-written. Your publication on the newsstand is a delightful respite from the *Cinefantastiques* of the world that are little more than glossy press releases.

Keep 'em coming!

Greg Goodsell
Bakersfield, CA.

I want to congratulate you on another great issue, #15. Finally, somebody writes about one of the most underrated American film directors, Ray Dennis Steckler. Thank you for the extensive info on his re-edited titles. Too many zines today have a tendency to write about filmmakers like Steckler, but fail to keep us up to date on what they're currently doing.

I recently went to Las Vegas and stopped by Steckler's Mascot video store. After buying several of his videos, I was asked if I wanted Steckler to autograph them. Steckler was not at the office, but the clerk called him on his car phone and told him I was there. Ray quickly headed back to the video store where he autographed my video tapes and took pictures with me, and chatted with me until I had to leave. He's a nice, down-to-earth guy, and he actually cares about his fans! Ray, thanks for everything!

Jim Bielicke
St. Louis, MO

Your magazine reminds me that exploitation films (past & present) are alive & well, and that bad movies which are bad can be infinitely better than so-called good/mainstream movies that are bad. I particularly enjoyed the series of articles on the samurai films. I took a class on Japanese cinema at the University of Illinois with David Desser who was cited in the first article — and who would probably approve of the articles. Perhaps a series to help us cinephiles wade through the vast number of spaghetti westerns? Or Samuel Fuller movies? Thank you for such a cool magazine.

David Moser
Rockford, IL

My first impression was that this was going to be some hokey-joke magazine. But I've been reading your zine since the George Reeves issue, and I think it's the best thing going, right down to your sense of danger.

Hell yes, readers like it that you don't edit or censor the interviews!!! I for one am interested in philosophy and psychic studies; so when you let Korla Pandit talk about "harmonic vibrations" or Dave Stevens describe the habits of the ghost in his attic, I'm not bored; I'm fascinated!

Jeff Hollar
San Francisco, CA

Issue #17 was very interesting! I enjoyed the Kenji Sahara interview, but was looking for more info on films like *Rodan*, *The Mysterians*, etc. by Mr. Sahara. What a pleasant surprise to find a

story with wonderful photos of Anna May Wong. I hope you will continue with future articles on other Asian actresses such as Machiko Kyo, Miiko Taka, Yoko Tani, Nobu McCarthy, Tsai Chin, Nancy Kwan & France Nuyen. Looking forward to the Steve Reeves interview and hope one day to see interviews with William Smith & Arch Hall Jr.

Mr. Carmen Finamore
Westfield, NJ



Wanted: More readers like... Ray Dennis Steckler!

I've loved your magazine ever since I picked up #4 a few years back. As a lover of Japanese monsters, obscure horror, etc. I can truly say that yours is the most satisfying publication of its kind. You've stayed true to the course that *Filmfax* eventually veered from and, in the process, avoided the blandness that has swarmed that once-great zine.

There is a Regal Video Release called *Death Wish Club*. I've never seen any mention of this flick in *Cult Movies*, *Filmfax*, *Psychotronic*, etc., yet if there is one "undiscovered" movie deserving of cult status this is it. *Death Wish Club* (probably not the title under which it was released in the late '70s/early '80s) concerns a college student who falls for an adult film star who (A) Undergoes a psychological sex change, and (B) Belongs to a suicide club that plays Russian Roulette with various bizarre devices. Does anyone have any background info on this great degenerate movie?

I have basically the same question about a Swedish movie called *The Doll* (1964). It concerns a lonely guy who steals a mannequin that comes to life (in his mind, maybe). Although it sounds trite, it is absolutely dripping with atmosphere, very creepy black & white photography. Again, I've seen no press for this movie in the cult zines. I rented it from Facets Video here in Chicago, but since it's gone into limbo.

Also, the next time you guys run into Jack Hill, can you ask him "Whatever happened to..." Jill Banner? She stole the show in *Spider Baby*, and was also pretty good in *The President's Analyst*. I can guess that she probably doesn't act anymore, but is she even alive?

One last question. Does anyone out there know if *Pray For The Wildcats* (mid-'70s I'd say) is on video? My friends and I caught the last 30 minutes of this hilarious flick one night at about two in the morning when we turned the TV on just in time to see a sideburned William Shatner being attacked

by an axe-wielding Andy Griffith. And no, we weren't on drugs. Throw into this mess Robert "Mr. Brady" Reed and the dentist from *Bob Newhart* and you've got an acid dream delight. Ever hear of this movie?

Jim Christopoulos
Chicago, IL

Wish you'd run photos of the new Godzilla films you're covering. Dave Milner's interviews with the Japanese actors/directors/writers are very interesting. I liked the Titus Moody interview, especially the nice things he had to say about working with Ray Steckler back in the '40s. And even though I'm too young to have seen any of Korla Pandit's shows on TV, I thought what he had to say was right on target. Keep up the good work.

Rick Ross
Miami Beach, FL

Concerning SpiderSubke's entertaining review of *Delirium* (1972), director Ralph Brown is really Renato Polselli. Polselli is also known for *Vampire and the Ballerina* (1960), *Monster of the Opera* (1964) and others. I continue to enjoy your fine magazine.

Conrad Widener
S. Connellsville, PA

Loved your latest issue; the diversity helps. The Dallesandro article was fascinating, the Larry Fine article was a joy, and the dicotomy between Anna May Wong and Annabel Chong made an interesting point, without belaboring it.

I'm personally happy to see less emphasis on Wood and Lugosi; I feel that path has become well-worn.

Roger Leatherwood
San Leandro, CA

I greatly enjoyed your article on Anna May Wong in issue no. 17 of *Cult Movies*. Hers is an interesting story that tells us much about the difficulties of Asian American actors in Hollywood. The photographs with the article are marvelous.

One small correction, however: In describing *Daughter Of Shanghai* on page 28, you write, "She even got to have a happy romance in this one with Chinese actor Philip Ahn." Philip Ahn was Korean (or Korean American, if you will), not Chinese. Indeed, he was the son of one of the most famous leaders in the Korean nationalist movement before World War II. How ironic, then, that he was many times cast as a Japanese military officer. He did, of course, portray Chinese in many of his films, as well. He also played a Vietnamese in one film and, I believe, a Burmese in another. He was, in short, Hollywood's all-purpose Asian.

Sincerely,
Michael E. MacMillan

Got something to say? Write to:

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MOVIE & VIDEO REVIEWS



Boom In The Moon

(1946) With Buster Keaton, Angel Garasa, Virginia Seret. From U.S.A. Home Video.

Produced in Mexico as *El Moderno Barba Azul* (*A Modern Bluebeard*), this oddball sci-fi farce, which has been retitled *Boom In The Moon*, stars Buster Keaton as a World War II soldier who is cast adrift and winds up on the Mexican coast. Believing he's landed in Japan, and unaware that the war is over, he is jailed after refusing to identify himself to local authorities. The captain of police mistakes him for an escaped murderer — a modern day "Bluebeard" who killed six women — so poor Buster is sentenced to death.

But when a scientist needs volunteers to pilot his new atomic rocketship, Buster and his cellmate (Angel Garasa), who has also been accused of murder, become guinea pigs for the experiment. With the scientist's niece (Virginia Seret) along as an unwitting companion, the two convicts orbit the Earth and finally crash-land only a few miles from the launch site. The intrepid space explorers then start roaming the Mexican countryside, thinking they've reached the lunar surface.

Boom In The Moon was made during a lowpoint in Keaton's career. In the 1920s he turned out a series of brilliant comedy shorts (*One Week*, *Cops*, *The Boat*, *The Scarecrow*) and features (*Sherlock, Jr.*, *Our Hospitality*, *The Navigator*, *The General*) — all now available from Kino Video — but by the early '30s, personal and professional problems made a shambles of his life and livelihood. By the mid-'40s, Keaton was reduced to accepting whatever work came his way; this Mexican production is a painful reminder of the thankless movie roles he was offered during this period.

The film is lame and silly, although there are fleeting moments of amusement, particularly in the first half, when Buster is able to insert some bits of physical comedy into the proceedings. But once the space travel plot is introduced, there's nothing he can do to breathe life into the tired storyline.

In addition to the poor script, Buster doesn't receive much help from his co-stars, the majority of whom are given to the kind of cartoonish over-acting found in other Mexican comedies (*Tin Tan*, *Clavillazo*, *Capulina*, etc.). And, shades of his largely disastrous '30s teaming with Jimmy Durante, the Great Stone Face is saddled with a "funny" sidekick, as though he can't be depended upon to be funny enough on his own. On a similar note, Cantinflas, Mexico's greatest movie comedian, was assigned comic sidekicks in his early



pictures, until it was wisely decided that he didn't need one. (Speaking of Cantinflas, *Boom In The Moon* was directed and co-written by Jaime Salvador, who scripted numerous Cantinflas comedies.)

As with many foreign productions, all of the dialogue — including Keaton's — has been dubbed in English for American consumption; the English dialogue is delivered in the same monotone style heard in many *Kung Fu* or *Hercules* epics. (The original Mexican version of the film is occasionally aired on Spanish-language TV stations.)

Not unexpectedly, the production values are extremely low budget. However, the rocketship

model, though nothing spectacular, is surprisingly elaborate for such an impoverished endeavor.

Buster Keaton was one of the finest comedic talents in motion picture history. Happily, shortly after completing this soggy excuse for a movie, he underwent an international rediscovery, resulting in a restored reputation and a new career in television. *Boom In The Moon* is for staunch academics only, although it's bound to severely test the mettle of even the most indulgent cinema masochist.

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

The Oblong Box

(AIP, 1969) With Vincent Price, Hilary Dwyer, Alastair Williamson

"They say the deeper you get, the easier it becomes." This bit of dialogue from *The Oblong Box*, delivered by Vincent Price to the character of an embezzler, could perhaps also be directed at Price himself, who glided effortlessly through the nasty plot of this eleventh Poe. The longest (95 minutes) of the Price/"Poes," the 19th century tale had Price as an English nobleman whose brother (Alastair Williamson) was mutilated by African natives avenging the killing of one of the children of the tribe. Price keeps the mad Williamson chained in a tower room of the English family house, but through a too elaborate series of events Williamson escapes, dons a crimson hood and begins slitting the throats of unwary co-stars (including Christopher Lee, billed as a "special guest star" as though this were an episode of some TV variety show!).

Emblematic of these latter-day Poes, the story behind the movie was almost as convoluted as the sloppy script, with plans to make the film in Spain as an Anglo-Spanish co-production scuttled, and Irish shooting also considered. Michael Reeves was initially slated to direct (AIP promised that he could shoot his "pet project," a movie about Jesus returning in modern times, if he made *Oblong Box* first), but the mixed-up Reeves dropped out the weekend prior to shooting, resulting in the last-minute decision to slip producer Gordon Hessler in as director of the film (shot at Shepperton). Lawrence Huntington's original script, poor by all accounts, was re-written over the phone by Christopher Wicking. "I got a call from [Hessler] on a Monday asking for more scenes for Vincent Price," Wicking told Fangoria's Philip Nutman. "They also needed scenes with more production value, scenes of extras in taverns, whatever. Vincent often felt like Christopher Lee in the *Dracula* movies, that he was just being used as a name, wasn't being given enough to do."

This sort of behind-the-scenes tumult rarely results in anything approximating a good movie, as *Oblong Box* explicitly demonstrates; it resembles the stylish Corman Poes about as much as it resembles the original Poe story (an anecdotal account of a mysterious box aboard a New York-bound packet ship). Gore-for-gore's-sake, *Oblong* begins with the mangling of Williamson (spikes are driven through his hands to affix him to poles), follows him through whorehouses, pub fights and other bloody encounters, shows in flashback the killing of the African child (trampled by a mounted horse) and climactically reveals Price to be the child's murderer. After being shotgunned by Price, the dying Williamson bites Price's hand, somehow passing along to him the effects of his muti-

lation as though it were an illness. Price's now-mutated face is seen at the end, followed by a freeze-frame face also capped *Conqueror Worm*.

By this point, Price was around just to furnish a semblance of "continuity" and to lend a small touch of class to a series in desperately low supply. People on the set of *Oblong Box* still talk about the day that Price met for the first time Christopher Lee (who played in the film a mod-looking medical experimenter forced to harbor Williamson). After Lee gushed a bit too enthusiastically about how much he had been looking forward to working with Price, Price coldly looked him up and down and said, "Cool it, Alice." (The two went on to co-star in many more movies and share a long friendship.) Sick rather than scary, *Oblong Box* may very well be the sort of movie that Price was referring to in 1991 when he told *The New York Post's* Martin Burden, "The minute censorship was removed, [horror movies] could do anything they wanted to do, and they lose the logic of the film. I find them very violent, very humorless." Patrick Gibbs of *The Daily Telegraph* wrote of *Oblong Box* that neither Price nor Poe "is found in their best form," a sentiment shared by A. H. Weiler of *The New York Times*, who complained that the moviemakers "who have been mining Poe's seemingly inexhaustible literary lode like mad, now have unearthed *The Oblong Box* to illustrate once again that horror can be made to be quaint, laughable and unconvincing." Writer Wicking's "minor joy" was the fact that *Oblong Box* was banned in Texas for being too "pro-Negro."

Reviewed by Tom Weaver

The Unearthly

(Republic, 1957) With John Carradine, Myron Healey, Allison Hayes, Tor Johnson

The box office bonanza reaped by *The Black Sleep* (1956) presumably gave producer/director Boris Petroff the idea that half-alike picture might clean up as well. Petroff, a former dance director, had put on 300 stage shows at the New York Paramount, including one for Mae West, before coming to Hollywood in 1933. After dabbling in films for years without making much of a name for himself, he apparently decided that his name was the problem; in 1956 he initiated steps to legally change it to Brooke Peters. *The Unearthly* (shooting title: *The House of Monsters*) was his first picture under the new moniker, another simultaneously announced feature (*They Lived a Million Years*, from his own script about monster glacier crabs in the Arctic) falling by the wayside. *The Unearthly's* shooting dates are elusive (which indicates that it might have been made outside the unions), but it's referred to as "recently completed" in a May, 1957, Hollywood Reporter. APT Pictures negotiated with Petroff for distribution rights and subsequently took over the picture, which was released by Republic.

The Unearthly's "original" story was provided by Petroff's wife Jane Mann, who also co-wrote the screenplay. Practically a modern-day remake of *The Black Sleep*, it puts John Carradine in the Basil Rathbone role of the lunatic surgeon; replaces Herbert Rudley with Myron Healey as the fugitive from justice; substitutes Marilyn Buford for Phyllis Stanley as the mad doctor's pining-for-love nurse; reinstates Tor Johnson as one of the experimental victims; and provides an even gris-

lier gallery of basement monsters. Perhaps Carradine saw *The Unearthly* as a sort of consolation prize following his demeaning role in *The Black Sleep*; more likely he just hated both of 'em. Top-billed, gray at the temples and over-the-top as never before in a mad scientist movie, he rants and raves with forceful vigor, evening beginning one tirade with the classic lead-in line, "They've always called the greatest scientists crazy...!"; a ten-second countdown takes over twenty seconds when it's the hammy Carradine who gets to shout out the numbers. Shooting in an actual house gives the evil goings-on the same sort of seedy, claustrophobic feeling as the old Poverty Row horror flicks that *The Unearthly* (and *Black Sleep*) were emulating plot-wise. The story, as if you didn't know it, is set in a secluded Georgia mansion where Prof. Conway (Carradine) and his assistant Dr. Gilchrist (Buford) operate a "rest home" for sufferers of various psychological maladies. But the musty mansion is really a cover for Conway's mad surgical experiments: Conway is convinced that he can add to the 16 existing glands of the human body an artificially developed 17th gland that will end the aging process and prolong life eternally, and he sees his patients (Allison Hayes, Arthur Batanides, Sally Todd) as human guinea pigs. A fugitive killer (Myron Healey), a musclebound handyman (Tor Johnson) and an owl-like looking zombie (Harry Fleer) round out the cast.

Everybody who writes about *The Unearthly* goes into Carradine, Hayes or Tor Johnson, so just this once let's spill a little ink on Marilyn Buford, Carradine's lovesick accomplice. A native of Detroit, Buford represented California in the 1946 Miss America pageant and walked offstage with the coveted crown. The beauty award opened few Hollywood doors for the wannabe actress so she headed off to Italy, where director Roberto Rossellini gave her a part in his *The Machine to Kill Bad People* (1948), about a magic camera which has the power to petrify or kill. Other roles in European films included *Fame and the Devil* (Italian, 1950), *Beauties of the Night* (French, 1952; written and directed by Rene Clair) and *Adorable Creatures* (French, 1956). She was a popular actress in Italy yet her (bad) luck held out in Hollywood; her return was greeted with roles in movies like *The Unearthly* and *Queen of Outer Space* (1958, as the handmaiden executed for disloyalty). She'd probably make an interesting interviewee, if anybody knew where the hell to look for her.

The great cast of '50s B players, the moldy Monogram-style ambience and the monster-filled finale are enough to keep most fans happy for 73 minutes, and yet *The Unearthly* invariably gets the bum's rush in most of the horror movie references books. But notice that most of these same books never get the plot quite right; for instance, Tor Johnson almost always gets credit for helping to save the day at the end, which he doesn't do. (In fact, he's unconscious throughout all of the climactic action.) Speaking for myself, I'm good and tired of the people who like to write about movies but don't like to bother to sit down for an hour and watch them. If you haven't watched a movie closely enough or recently enough to describe the plot, then what good is your synopsis and, come to think of it, what good is your damn opinion? Lately there are too many chiefs in this hobby and not enough Indians, and I find myself getting

awfully tempted to name a few names and take a few scalps. Watch this space.

The Unearthly's poster featured a gold ribbon marked "Guaranteed TO FRIGHTEN!" Everyone I know who saw the movie in 1957 says it did just that, and despite a few low spots it's still a fun and creepy cheapie today.

Reviewed by Tom Weaver

Ali Baba and the Sacred Crown

(Director: Emimmo Salvi. Starring: Rod Flash Iloosh, Bella Cortez, Furio Meniconi, Liliana Zagra, Amedeo Trilli)

This film begins as one of the most vicious outings the sword and sandal genre has to offer. After a violent first half, however, the film comes to an almost complete halt. Actually, most of these Musclemepics have to include a scene when the Hero's been captured and made to undergo some type of terrible torture by the villain. This particular film not only puts Ali Baba through his paces once, but several times and even has him dressing up as a woman just to sneak in to see his girlfriend.

The first half of the film sets up the premise well enough. Ali Baba's been entrusted with a sacred crown; a good Caliph is supposed to receive the crown, but evil henchmen he has running his army manage to convince him that Ali's stolen it instead. Almost as soon as this has been established we're off to the dungeon. These torture scenes that follow go far beyond the typical "tie the guy up and beat him with a whip that's been smeared with so much shoe polish that no matter how lightly we hit him it'll still leave streak marks" kind of situation. No; first off—and this is going to be kind of tough to describe—Ali Baba is placed, standing up, in a sort of giant vice. While the slaves turn the wheel at the bottom, the base starts to rise, crushing our hero. Also, friends of Ali Baba's are attached to the underside of the base by nooses which, as the base raises, starts to strangle and hang the friends. These scenes are usually the best time to check out the star's build since the straining motions he has to go through to make it all believable tend to pump up his muscles all the more. Here we get to see what we kind of knew already. Rod Flash Iloosh has a great set of pecs but the rest of his build is rather stocky; plenty of mass but not much definition or substance. When he's relaxed Rod looks great and fills out a pair of tights real well, but when he has to get into action, it's not quite there.

Almost as soon as the first torture is done, Ali and his friends are chained to horses that try and drag them into some flames. Again, a lot of time and film effects are spent bringing this stunt off, and we got some great shots of Rod in straining position. Now the story begins to move again with Ali being freed by Bella Cortez, the Caliph's daughter who's actually trying to set him up to be killed but he kidnaps her instead, starting a love-hate relationship between them. Almost as suddenly the story starts into a loop of repeating itself till the end. The bad guys raid the city, those who aren't killed are pumped for information on the whereabouts of Ali Baba; when they don't talk, they're killed. Ali hears about this so he and his men retaliate. Repeat. Even Ali getting stabbed pretty good and having to be saved by the woman who loves to hate him is only a brief side trip from this circle. For reason's no better than they have to

(continued)

place some females in trouble to end the film, Bella and Ali's sister are captured by the villains and along with the Caliph are placed in front of another large torture prop. This is a pendulum which swings up and knocks the victims in the head, pushing them off a platform into a flaming pit. Of course Ali shows up in time and the populace revolts on cue so that while most of the town's people are killed off and the love interests are saved.

There's just such an odd feeling to this movie. Early on an incredible amount of attention is given to the exaggerated torture scenes, while the last half of the film is as routinely done as it could be. In a kind of disturbing twist to the love story, Bela Cortez's character comes to love Ali Baba when he all but forces himself on her, which is only met with slight resistance. We're given a quick black-out and a time loss to give us the impression that something stronger than mere extorted kisses went on while we were away. Soon enough, she's back in chains. This movie is worth recommending, but maybe with some reservations to its tone. Maybe the best thing to do is not think about it. Enjoy the bodybuilder sweating and straining. Enjoy him briefly wearing women's robes and passing off a midget as his child. Enjoy the torture chamber and the pendulum that looks like they were made with giant Lincoln Logs. Stopping to think about it defeats the purpose of slipping this one into the machine in the first place.

Reviewed by Stephen Flaccasser

The Black Cat

(1966 Produced by Patrick Sims. Written and directed by Harold Hoffman. Starring Robert Frost and Robin Baker)

Like many Poe adaptations, this one tries to mix and match moments from several of Edgar's works. The film opens on a moody set piece with our featured psycho contemplating a sunset while (in voiceover) he drones out the final lines of Poe's poem, "Alone." Elements from "The Tell Tale Heart" also appear.

As is the case in many regional productions, this filmed-in-Dallas shocker never seems "real" until it abandons the terror, gets out of the spook house and into the gritty night world of downtown; clubs, dance floors, and whore bars, as they truly are, with no Hollywood artifice. Since our psycho happens to be an out of control alcoholic, there are several nightcub excursions, some to a remarkable musical accompaniment. These each tend to be a welcome relief from the dismal unfoldment of terror that's straining real hard to be ghastly.

Falcon International was a Dallas-based company that produced three earlier films — *The Trail of Lee Harvey Oswald*, *Under Age*, and *Free, White and 21* — before doing this, it's first horror attempt. It had a successful national run, and Boxoffice Magazine cited Harold's directing as "having impact and incisiveness." Columbia and United Artists both bid for distribution rights but Hemisphere Pictures wound up releasing *The Black Cat* on a double horror bill. Now on video for the first time, this comes from the directors own 35mm print which is in beautiful condition. Contact Falcon International, 4360 E. Main St, Suite 432-A, Ventura, CA 93003.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

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The Million Eyes of Su Maru

(1967 Directed by Lindsey Shonteff; with Shirley Eaton, Klaus Kinskey. Based on a novel by Sax Rohmer)

If Fu Manchu films can be seen as bargain basement James Bond thrillers, then this Oriental oddity must reside in some uncertain realm beneath that basement. The exotic and deadly Su Maru and her band of beautiful slaves plan a diabolical, man hating plot to rule the world. This B of B movies is so zany it's hard to believe we're meant to take it at all seriously! It takes place in Hong Kong (and the Shaw Brothers Studios are credited for what may likely have been mere stock footage) but the action seemingly takes place on the twisted roads of Hollywood's Laurel Canyon and the area around Santa Monica and Venice Beach. Su Maru's mansion headquarters is actually an elaborate, atmospheric restaurant in Los Angeles' Chinatown.

The Asian gang of girls and their leader are not Asian at all, but girls of all different races with outrageous black eye make-up so characteristic of

the sixties. The heroes of this movie are Frankie Avalon and George Nader; they turn out one-liners like a comedy act on a Vaudeville stage; the evil one, Shirley Eaton, playing it dark and serious makes a very bizarre contrast.

One part of the movie where Su Maru's gang attack the Feds is one big mess of bombs going off in certain areas before being being thrown; people dropping dead before they are shot — not to mention the obvious plastic guns.

For years I've been dreaming of once again seeing this masterpiece of bloopers and blunders, since it truly is packed with blazingly nostalgic 1960s entertainment value. At last it's available on VHS from Tropic Twilight Company. They've also released the direct sequel (also with Shirley Eaton) called *Future Women*.

Reviewed by John Teixeira

Fuego

(1969 Starring Alba Mujica, Isabel Sarli)

Hot blooded Laura can't seem to find the right young man. Or the right old man. Or the right woman. Or any one person to fulfill the wanton urges burning within her passionate soul. Love, jealousy and insatiable lust sizzle from the screen in this classy, trashy film of runaway emotions. Early in the movie Laura marries a wealthy man, but that doesn't slow her down in her need for further erotic encounters. In due time she collapses in despair, discovering — as heroines down through the ages have learned — that unending carnality alone cannot satisfy the emptiness of a lonely spirit. At one point she tells her husband she longs for suicide, rather than endure her sordid life any longer. Can she ever find fulfillment?

Known to some as the Russ Meyer of Argentina, Armondo Bo has created a lush, haunting art film beyond the imagination of most American filmmakers of the era. (Armond Bo also contributed to the lavish musical score.) The tragic double suicide climax to the film evokes an ethereal sense rarely found in the adult cinema. The director experiments with the editing, innovating new depictions of time lapse that would've pleased D. W. Griffith.

The beautiful locations are photographed in brilliant color, and seemingly any location can be suggestive of the mating game. We find Laura taking passionate embraces in the woods, in a lake, and even in a chicken coop! One startling scene even depicts nude passion high up in the mountains, amidst the ice and snow. Though necessarily brief, the scene is "chillingly" real; no spreading out a bath towel before the naked couple reclines for love in the newly fallen snow!

Seldom will be found an adult art film of such superior nature, truly mature in appeal. Available in English language from the 1969 American theatrical release (\$19.95 plus \$4.00 shipping from Alpha Blue Archives, PO Box 16072, Oakland, CA 94601)

Reviewed by Michael Copner

What About Jane?

(1971 Directed by Tom Hanley, Richard Hoyt and Peter Tar-Sian. Starring Emily Smith, John Christian, Martha Strawberry and Lee Parsons. Music by Alyosha Jonson. A co-production of Leo Productions and Cinmarin Films)

This XXX sex film is a must for adult collectors or historians. Produced in 1971 it's one before

Deep Throat made the big breakthrough and put sex on the map. The genre was in the process of defining itself and discovering new formulae not yet established in explicit adult entertainment. Though this is a genuine hardcore film showing full penetration and oral foreplay, there are none of the obligatory male ejaculation shots which became a given by 1973.

Emily Smith (an earthy redhead, later re-discovered and re-named Claire Oia in Robert McCallum's *Three A. M.*) is having a frustrating sex life with her husband, and so reaches out to her foxy, busty girlfriend. Obviously this is not an innovative plot device, but the intrigue (from where we sit in 1996) is seeing how competently "film-like" this situation is presented. Most porno looked pretty decent until the time when every idiot in the country got his hands on a camcorder, and thus all productions became amateur productions. In this film our four actors do some acting, there is deft camerawork with a purposful variety to it — and there is absolutely no rock or disco on the musical score! It's a 25-year-old sex film the way it used to be, when most of the best west-coast porn was out of San Francisco, and it's a damn good show. The folks at Alpha Blue Archives have uncovered an absolutely beautiful print which even includes a short bit of exit music at the films end. If this sounds like a nostalgia trip you'd like, see the Alpha Blue ad in this issue and respond accordingly.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot (Volumes 1 thru 4)

Finally! Orion Home Video realized that they had the much beloved and sought after classic of Japanese Science Fiction television, *Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot* (Giant Robo) and released the first eight episodes on four separate videos, each containing two episodes recorded in SP mode (!) at a very affordable retail price, available in most sell through video outlets.

Originally shown on U. S. television in 1969, the series follows the adventures of young Johnny Sokko, who controls Giant Robot, a gigantic mechanical marvel. Johnny soon joins up with Unicorn, an organization devoted to foiling the evil Emperor Guillotine and the villainous Gargoyle Gang. Guillotine sends many giant monstrosities to battle Giant Robot while the world hangs in the balance...

Aside from the series compilation which was syndicated by American-International TV as *Voyage Into Space*, the only way to see this series was by buying murky video copies from questionable sources. Thankfully, those days are over! Each handsomely packaged volume, adorned with nice color photos and plot descriptions contains two episodes which look beautiful; it would appear that Orion had access to the original Japanese versions, since new video generated subtitles are used in the shows, as opposed to the original U.S. version, which simply enlarged the frame to obscure them! The series' original English-language opening and closing credits are retained (and look mighty grainy compared to the rest of the show!). My only complaint is that Orion opted not to include the series' Next Episode promos, which were quite enjoyable on their own.

In an era when many classic Japanese SF titles

are being unearthed after many years only to have the original English dubbing, usually done state-side, replaced by more literal, often inferior voice tracks (usually done outside the U. S.), Johnny Sokko retains it's original English language dubbing, recorded in Miami way back when! All in all, it's a field day for Japanese SF fans.

So far, Orion has released the following volumes: Vol. 1 - *Dracolon, The Great Sea Monster* and *Nucleon, The Magic Globe*. Vol. 2 - *Gargoyle Vine, A Space Plant* and *Tyrox, A Strange Monster*. Vol. 3 - *Destroy The Dam* and *The Transformed Humans*. Vol. 4 - *The Gigantic Claw* and *Fragon, The Ninja Monster*.

Hopefully, they will release the remaining 18 episodes in the series. Interested parties should contact Orion Home Video at 1888 Century Park East, Los Angeles, CA 90067-1729.

Reviewed by Kip Doto

Castle Of The Creeping Flesh

(1967, Aquila Film Enterprises, West Germany)
Alternate Titles: *Castle Of Bloody Lust, The Castle Of Unholy Desires*

Producer: Pier A. Caminacci. Director: Percy G. Parker (Adrian Hoven). Screenwriters: Percy G. Parker, Eric Martin Schnitzler.

With Janine Reynaud, Howard Vernon, Michael Lemoine, Elvira Berndorff.

"Life and death — They are alike. But there is love. Love creates life; love has a right to kill. But he who kills for revenge will be cursed." — a bit of home-spun philosophy from Howard Vernon as Count von Saxon.

Made by the same man (Adrian Hoven) who brought us the unpleasant and mean-spirited *Mark Of The Devil* (1969) and *Mark Of The Devil 2* (1972), it is unsurprising that *Castle Of The Creeping Flesh* is as nasty as it is. The story concerns a small group of hedonistic party-goers, headed by a brutal Baron (Michael Lemoine), who stumble into the castle of the reclusive Count von Saxon (Howard Vernon; Dr. Orloff himself from *The Awful Dr. Orloff*, 1962). The Count is trying to revive his dead daughter through some kind of medical operation and chooses one of the visiting girls as an unwilling donor.

With an overly talky script (not helped by atrociously dubbed dialogue) populated by unlikable

characters, the film's only real asset is an overpowering sense of decadence which gives the proceedings a sleazy sort of attractiveness. The photography and sets are lushly Gothic, and there are some truly erotic sequences involving actress Janine Reynaud, a sensuous beauty often found in the films of Jess Franco. There are also endless unpleasant close-ups of real-life open heart surgery as the Count (a surgeon) tries to revive his dead daughter using "borrowed" organs; a silly man in a bear suit inflicting face slaps on a cast member with his paws; several gratuitous rape scenes; and a gratingly bad piano-bar jazz score.

Though not for everyone, *Castle Of The Creeping Flesh* has a repellant yet at the same time fascinating air to it which makes it nearly watchable.

Reviewed by Bryan Senn

Mommy

(1995) Written & directed by Max Allan Collins, based on his short story; produced (for video release) by James K. Hoffman; running time 89 mins; color.

How many of you remember Patty McCormack as *The Bad Seed*?

Plowing through a batch of videotapes of movies I'd been handed to review, I saw this one staring me in the face and was, at first, turned off by the title, figuring it for another moron slasher flick. Then I caught a name — Max Allan Collins — and stopped dead in my tracks, no pun intended. Not only is Collins a much-awarded mystery writer, he also penned three of my all-time favorite books, the "Eliot Ness" mysteries (novels adapted from truth), so I read the attached pr material then popped the tape into my machine and sat back to enjoy a good old-fashioned psycho-thriller and a loving tribute to *The Bad Seed*.

Be warned: If you're contemplating a blood and guts slashfest, stay away from this one. Bloodletting is restrained and, as it happens, necessary. If you're finding yourself getting intrigued, RENT IT! A big fan of *The Bad Seed*, Collins patterned his killer as though Rhoda Penmark had grown up to become "Mommy." He even (thankfully) went after Patty McCormack for the role. She's deliciously chilling and imperious as she storms an-

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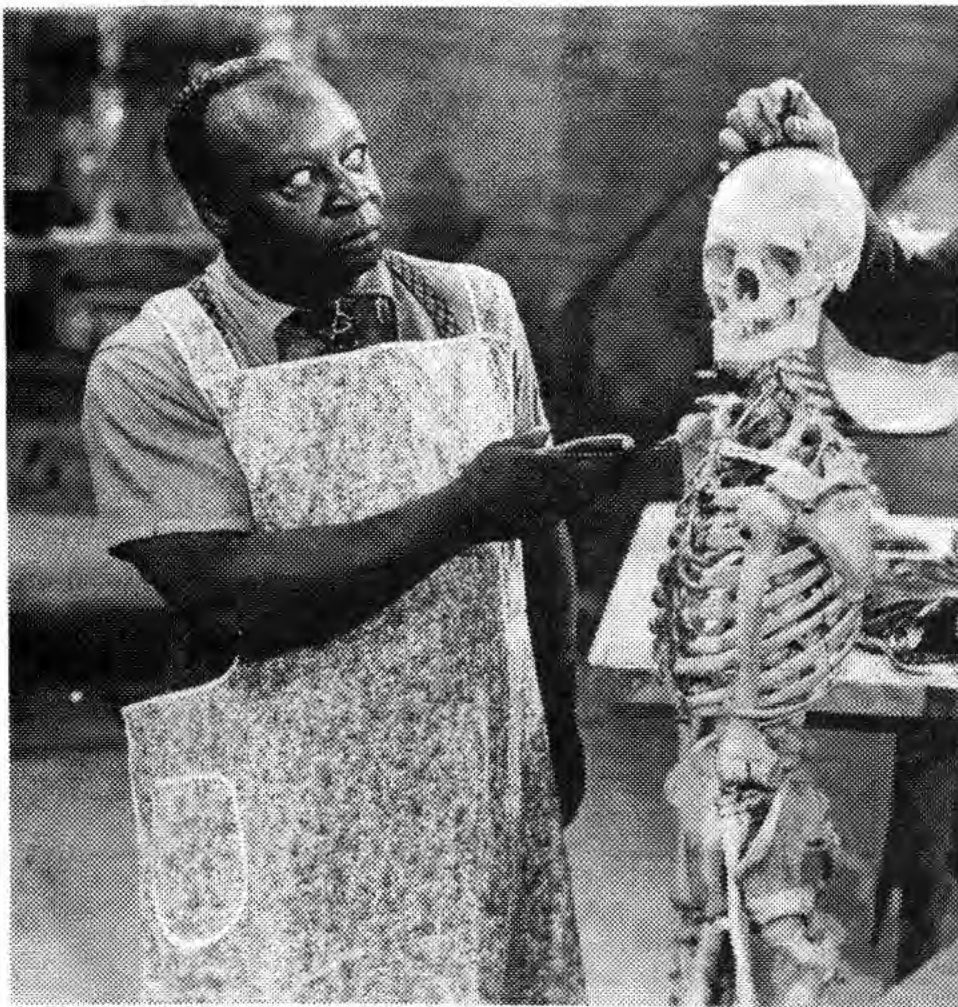
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Master comedian Mantan Moreland was the star of Monogram's *King of the Zombies* in 1941.

grily into her daughter's school to protest the fact that little Jessica Ann didn't win *Student of the Year* again. Predictably, when hard reason fails, McCormack bumps off the teach (Majel Barrett) then dismisses the event as a minor accident. A little later, her distraught daughter shrinks at the mention of "dinner" and McCormack retorts "A little unpleasantness is not going to get in the way of good nutrition!" And she does it with a straight face, too. A sticker on the back of her car says "I'm the Mommy - that's why!"

Collins could've bludgeoned us to death with this sort of campy humor, but he knew his audience. He allows McCormack to maintain her "Who's your best friend in the whole world" stance throughout, but it never gets out of hand. He also understood that Jessica Ann had to be the movie's true heroine in a reversal of the roles enacted in *The Bad Seed*. He elicited a strong, tense, endearing performance out of 12 year-old Rachel Lemieux. As Jessica Ann's aunt (and surrogate protector), modern-day "Scream Queen" Brinke Stevens is competent, coming off very sensitive. As the cop on the case, Jason (*Exorcist*) Miller is properly world-weary and wise to McCormack from the very beginning while Michael Cornelison is an ill-fated insurance investigator who gets close to Lemieux. As the school's hapless young janitor, Sarah Jane Miller virtually parodies *Bad Seed*'s Henry Jones' performance and mystery author Mickey Spillane is on hand as McCormack's attorney. The suspenseful score is by Richard Lowry. Max Allan Collins is a successful first-time director here, even writing and performing some

of the soundtrack's songs. Discouraged with the facades of Hollywood, Collins prefers making movies for video and cable. I'm damned curious to see what else he can do. As a theatrical movie, *Mommy* most likely would've bombed. Why? There's little or no mess, the murders being brutal but clean, and almost no questionable language. And no nudity or sex!

You're insane, Mr. Collins, but you're my hero.

Reviewed by Spider Subke

King Of The Zombies

(1941) With Mantan Moreland, Dick Purcell, Joan Woodbury, Henry Victor, John Archer and Patricia Stacey. Directed by Jean Yarbrough

Two years before Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With A Zombie* and nine years after Lugosi's classic turn in *White Zombie*, Monogram offered up this modest, stage-bound entry into the sub-genre, which remains for me one of their most entertaining features. And all the credit rests squarely on the shoulders of comic relief Mantan Moreland, who was just as funny as any comic actor of the forties, and then some. He's in top form here, and you can bet if he weren't a black man he would have headlined "A" comedies for the big studios. In fact, if it wasn't for his inclusion in the cast, this movie (like many less intentionally funny Monogram pictures) would be a real chore to watch, even at its slight 67 minutes running time.

The weak story goes something like this: Bob Winslow (John Archer) and his personal (wise-cracking) valet Jefferson "Jeff" Jackson (Moreland),

along with bush pilot James "Mac" McCarthy (Dick Purcell), go in search of Admiral Wainwright (Guy Usher), whose plane has disappeared on his way to Panama on "government work." Stray radio signals lure them to a crash landing on a remote Pacific island ruled over by a reclusive scientist, Dr. Sangre (Henry Victor). Jeff, being a "servant," is exiled to the kitchen for the night where he is the first to learn of Dr. Sangre's army of zombie slaves. Bob and Mac, skeptical at first, soon begin to believe Jeff and grow increasingly suspicious of Dr. Sangre. In order to quiet Jeff, Dr. Sangre hypnotizes him into believing he is a zombie. Being a zombie, however, doesn't stop Jeff from cracking wise in the least, leading a sympathetic lady cook (Marguerite Whitten) to convince him that he has not been "zombified." Not so easily undone is pilot Mac, who is made a zombie when he discovers that Sangre has the Admiral prisoner and is torturing him for "military secrets" to transmit back to the Nazis. At the end, in the midst of a bargain basement voodoo ceremony, the zombies (led by an "undead" Mac) turn on the doctor. Mac, even though he is riddled with Sangre's bullets, advances on the doctor and pushes him into a flaming pit. All the zombies are de-hypnotized and freed, including Mac, who is feeling pretty well even though he has just been pumped full of lead.

Papier Mache voodoo masks, painted backdrops and garish lighting abounds. Some may find the cheesy production values fun, but I have never been a big fan of Monogram's shoestring programmers. This one is no better or worse than the rest in that regard. The actors are all adequate, but nothing to write home about. Headliner Dick Purcell is given little to do but swagger and spout off. Henry Victor, in his dinner jacket and bow tie, does a pale imitation of Lugosi.

And then there's Mantan. While the blatant

racism of comic relief black characters is always offensive, it's to Mantan's credit that he was thought highly enough of, even in the early forties, to be allowed to carry this otherwise-forgettable turkey. Heck, even his name is a racist gag ("Man Tan" was a cream on the market in the thirties and forties for men to use to darken their skin and simulate a tan)! But it's not as bad as one might think. Although Jeff is a valet, he is clearly respected by both Bob and Mac, who pretty much treat him as "one of the guys." Jeff is a wise-ass, pure and simple, and he doesn't curb his tongue, even to his employer. And yet, Bob never calls him on it once, but accepts it all with good humor. I guess even he was aware of who the real star was.

King Of The Zombies is not to be missed. Let me close with a medley of choice Mantan lines which make this the masterpiece that it is: "I thought I was a little off-color to be a ghost," "This place is zombified!," to the other zombies, after he is hypnotized into believing he is one of them: "Move over, boys. I'm one of the gang now," — And the kicker, the line which closes the picture: "If there's one thing I wouldn't wanna be twice, zombies is both of 'em!" — Ladies and gentlemen, Mantan Moreland. What a guy!

Reviewed by Ron Ford

The Monolith Monsters

(1957) Directed by John Sherwood; effects by Clifford Stein; With Les Tremayne, William Schallert, Grant Williams, Lola Albright. (From Fight Video and MCA)

An excellent script, sincere acting, realistic effects, and one of the most original menaces ever to cross the screen make this a standout 1950s sci-fi film. Based on a story by Jack Arnold, and competently directed by Arnold protégé John Sherwood, the film introduces a relatively inanimate yet quite frightening "monster" in the form of crystals from outer space. These seemingly harmless bits of rock are anything but — absorbing all the silicon out of humans, resulting in total body rigidity and death. Even more terrifying (and spectacular) is the fact that when the alien crystals come into contact with water they grow to towering heights! The straitforward, almost documentary style direction common to '50s science fiction films, the realistic dialogue and character behavior, and the sincerity of the principal players all combine to create an everyday tableau against which this seemingly unstoppable and impersonal menace contrasts jarringly. The fact that the menace is impersonal (and not even alive) actually adds to the terror, making it more a force of nature (albeit an alien one) rather than a personal, intimate danger, thus exploiting Man's age-old fear of elements beyond his control.

The film is full of rich and believable dialogue, such as when one character, in figuring out how long before the destructive monoliths reach the town, grimly states, "The way I figure it we got seven or eight hours. Then St. Angelo is going to look more like a petrified forest than a town." But the film's main asset is the monolith monsters themselves. Shots of the crystals growing up to a height of ten stories before our very eyes and then crashing down only to have the pieces grow up again in a never-ending cycle of destruction are breathtaking. The unstoppable onslaught as the crashing stone towers crush farms, buildings, and literally everything in their path is photographed

so realistically that one has to strain to imagine that they are models. The lighting, so critical in miniature work, is very natural (adding to the realism), and the towering crystals rise up in a believable manner and shape. The slow-motion photography, the excellent use of deafening sounds, and the attention to detail, such as having realistic dust clouds rise up around the advancing juggernauts, completes the solid effects' believability.

The human element is handled well also, with a touching sub-plot about a small child slowly solidifying due to contact with the stones and the doctor's frantic efforts to find an antidote to the process. Grant Williams (best known for his sensitive and tragic portrayal as *The Incredible Shrinking Man*) is well cast as the geologist hero who first uncovers the menace. At the climax, after learning that salt stops the crystal's growth, he formulates a plan to destroy a nearby private dam which will wash through a salt plain and hopefully halt the monoliths' advance. However, the dam is privately owned and the authorities are waiting for a confirmation from the Governor to blow it. Williams, realizing that confirmation may come too late, takes the responsibility upon himself and blows the dam — then delivers the understatement of the film, "Well, let's hope the Governor makes the right decision." Williams plays the part with just the right amount of compassion and grim determination. The remainder of the cast act quite naturally, a rare occurrence in low budget '50s films. Deserving of special praise is Les Tremayne as the weary, good-natured editor of the only newspaper in this small town where nothing ever happens. Tremayne, who was mostly wasted in stereotypical roles in low-budget films throughout the '50s, brings a little extra to his character here, effectively mirroring the lost hope of unrealized dreams, giving us a glimmer of his talent which, unfortunately, went untapped on most occasions. Of course, the film does have its faults. The script has its share of standard '50s clunker lines such as, "You're absolutely right, it's ridiculous. But that's what someone said about the wheel when they first thought of it." And the ending still leaves a few fairly serious questions unanswered, such as just what are they going to do with the millions of tons of volatile crystals still trapped behind the impromptu salt lake? And what happens to all this deadly debris the next time it rains?

But this is splitting hairs. The film has a wonderfully unique story, excellent effects, a high believability quotient, and, unlike most of its contemporaries, is exciting without being exploitive.

Reviewed by Bryan Senn

Space Monster

(AIP, 1965) With Francine York, James B. Brown, Baynes Barron.

One of the worst science-fiction movies of the 1960s, the black-and-white *Space Monster* was steered straight to television by AIP, who perhaps saw the injustice in expecting people to pay to watch a film worse than the sci-fi TV shows (and older AIP movies!) people could see for free in their homes. Leonard Katzman (nephew of renowned movie miser Sam) wrote and directed this *Lost In Space*-like account of three men (James B. Brown, Baynes Barron, Russ Bender) and one woman (Francine York) dispatched into space

from Cape Kennedy aboard the spaceship *Hope 1* in the year 2000. Their mission is to find a planet suitable for colonization, but they are continually sidetracked: Discovering an alien craft hovering in space, Brown and Barron steal aboard and are attacked by an alien (the "exposed-brain" mask from *The Wizard Of Mars*). After killing their angry "host" and blowing up his ship, they encounter a storm of meteorites which look like burning marshmallows. Next on their things-to-do list is to accidentally streak off-course, crash-landing in the ocean of some far-flung moon. "Giant" crabs menace their ship as they make repairs, and scuba-diving Brown (or was it Barron?) is killed by a Gill Man-type monster (leftover from *War-Gods Of The Deep*). Returning home, the remaining trio radio Earth and instruct that the new planet be named for their dead colleague.

Space Monster is only fractionally better than the loathsome Texas-made Larry Buchanan movies AIP made for the idiot box. Katzman's script is a catalogue of clichés, the special effects and miniatures are on a *Space Patrol* level and the second-hand aliens (which one is the titular *Space Monster*?) are every bit as ludicrous as they were in *Wizard Of Mars* or *War-Gods*. (*The Wizard Of Mars* alien, sticking its tongue in and out at the spacemen, provides the picture's only good laugh.) The rest was all traditional space hazards and in-flight jibber-jabber, with York catching the eye of Brown and Barron, and a visibly tired, almost punchy-looking Bender prattling that they are the Columboes of space. (Apparently not sharing Bender's enthusiasm, Barron — or was it Brown? — calls the new planet "one lousy piece of real estate!")

The 80-minute feature was shot in mid-March 1965 at Producers Studio under the title *The First Woman In Space*. (At that point, it was still earmarked for theatrical distribution.) While the movie was in the editing room, producer Burt Topper laid plans for a sequel, *Journey Beyond The Stars* (later called *Flight Beyond The Sun*), which had a projected starting date of April 9, 1965. Happily, the Earth was spared.

Reviewed by Tom Weaver

The Reptile

(20th Century-Fox, 1966) With Noel Willman, Jennifer Daniel, Jacqueline Pearce.

I've had great success keeping my video cassette and laser disc collections virtually Hammer-free, but it occurred to me after renewing my acquaintance with their mystery-chiller *The Reptile* that it's not a bad movie to have around the house in case of dire emergency. Say a doctor drops by and tells you that you have just 90 minutes to live — slip *The Reptile* into the ol' VCR, hit play and you'll feel like you stuck it out a whole 'nother week. And should you happen to expire ahead of schedule, even (say) in the first half-hour, it won't really matter because you'll already have the "mystery" correctly figured out. It's a "win-win" situation.

The Reptile is reminiscent of Hammer's earlier *The Gorgon*, another "mystery" so transparent that one greatly flatters the film just by calling it that. In both movies, a series of grotesque deaths have put a village-full of mangy grumps into an even deeper funk. (In *The Gorgon* the dead men turn to stone; in *The Reptile*, they wear Al Jolson-

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Great News! All you hard-core drive-in fanatics will be pleased to know that last year (1995) was the first time in decades that there were more drive-in screens standing at the end of the year than there were at the beginning. Let's keep our fingers crossed, maybe this is the start of a new trend. In celebration of this joyous news, we've got another 12 nostalgia-packed double bill combos ready to go.

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! You've begged us for them for years and now we've finally caved in. This year, for the first time ever, we're offering "Walk-In Double Features." These are basically the same as our Drive-In combos except that the intermission material is geared for walk-in theaters. We've been sitting on top of a mountain of terrific walk-in material for a long time, and we're sure you'll find it all very, very enjoyable. There

are three walk-in combos and nine drive-in double features to satisfy your nostalgia cravings. All pairings include two movies recorded back to back, countdowns, snack bar ads, promotional announcements, previews of coming attractions—everything that used to make going to the movies such a unique AS-American experience. And as usual, we again have lots of new intermission stuff not previously available.

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BODY...
FED BY AN
UNSPEAKABLE
HORROR
FROM HELL!



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JOSEPH E. LEVINE PRESENTS

JACK THE RIPPER

DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 73 (#DI-73)*

THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE (1959) Herb Evers, Virginia Leith. TOTALLY UNCUT! Ludicrous black and white, sleazy schlock at its absolute best. A severed head, a gross looking monster, two battling strippers, a mad scientist... all blended together in an unbelievable way. This could be the single greatest piece of drive-in celluloid ever made. A crazed scientist keeps his decapitated fiancée's head alive in a pen full of strange solutions. Look out for the coneheaded monster in the closet. Other pre-records of this are drastically cut! From 16mm.

JACK THE RIPPER (1959) Lee Paterson, Eddie Byrne, Ewen Solon. The definitive film about the famed English madman. "Jack" commits a series of gruesome slayings in an effort to wipe out prostitution from the streets of London. Brutal and sadistic for its time with the famed 'color' sequence at the film's climax. "Are you Mary Clark?" A well acted, solid British thriller. From 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 74 (#DI-74)*

THE EMBALMER (1966) Maureen Brown, Gin Mart, Luciano Gaspar, Anita Todesco. One of the most sought after Italian horror films. A horrible fiend is on the loose under the streets of Venice. He pulls beautiful girls down into murky canals that catcomb the sewers of the ancient Italian city. He kills and "stuffs" them, then adds them to his grisly collection of mock-classic human statues that adorn the walls of his underground lair. Brrr! From 35mm.

THE SHE BEAST (1966) Barbara Steele, John Karlson, Mel Welles. An 18th century witch, killed by villagers, swears revenge from the grave. Two centuries later, Barb's car crashes into a lake and she transforms into the ancient sorceress who then sets out to terrorize the local villagers. Barb's gorgeous as usual, but we don't mind saying this is probably the pug-ugliest witch in the history of film. ugh! Color.



WALK-IN COMBO NO. 1 (#WI-01)*

THE MAD MONSTER (1942) George Zucco, Glenn Strange, Johnny Downs, Anne Nagel. Ever seen a werewolf in Osh Kosh before? You will now. A mad scientist transforms his dim-witted gardener into a snarling werewolf for the purpose of killing his enemies. This is a fun little cheapie, much on the same level as **THE DEVIL BAT**, which it was often teamed with on the '50s re-release circuit. From a gorgeous 16mm original print.

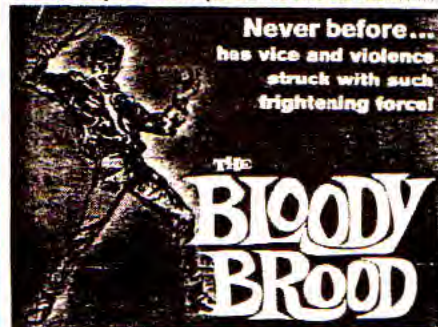
THE DEVIL BAT (1940) Bela Lugosi, Dave O'Brien, Suzanne Kaaren. Bela's giant murderous bats are on the loose, attacking and killing everyone wearing a strange shaving lotion concocted by Bela, himself. This is one of those priceless "B" schlockers that has an uncanny appeal to it. Lots of lab scenes, too. "Rub some here, on the tender part of your neck." Low budget charm. From 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 75 (#DI-75)*

GLEN OR GLENDA (1953 aka **LED 2 LIVES**) Ed Wood, Jr., Dolores Fuller, Timothy Farrell. The greatest exploitation film of all time and like no other study of transvestitism you'll ever come across. If there's such a thing as "inspired" lunacy, this film's got it. **LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT** disappeared, but this survived, now that's heavy. Some magical moments of total nonsense and hilarity.

VIOLATED (1954) Mitchell Kowal, Wim Hollar, Lili Dawn, Vicki Carlson. In what has to be one of the campiest exploitation films ever made, the police are baffled by a series of hair-fetish murders in which the killer slays his victims and then gives them a haircut. A psychopathologist is brought in to give the police advice (much like in **GLEN OR GLENDA**). The suspects are a paunchy old man with a thing for young girls, and a sleazy photographer. From 35mm.

Your shocked eyes will see it...your stunned mind won't believe it...



STARRING PETER FALK/JACK BETTS/BARBARA LORD
produced and directed by Julian Roffman/released by Sutton Pictures Corp



DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 76 (#DI-76)*

THE BLOODY BROOD (1959) Peter Falk, Jack Betts, Barbara Lord. An intense and sometimes brutal film about a drug dealing gang of beatniks who get their kicks by perverse and violent means. (They feed a messenger boy a hamburger laced with ground glass). Extremely well done for such a low budget vehicle. Falk is excellent in one of his earliest screen appearances. From 35mm.

THE BEATNIKS (1960) Tony Travis, Peter Breck, Karen Kadler. The good looking leader of a gang of beatnik thieves is heard singing along with a jukebox by a roving talent scout who offers him a chance at the big time. His beatnik buddy isn't too crazy about him breaking from the gang and sets out to cause trouble. Produced by legendary voice-man, Paul Frees. From 35mm.

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DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 77 (#DI-77)*

HERCULES AGAINST THE MOON MEN (1964) Alan Steel. Better than average muscleman stuff as Hercules battles magical moon men trying to conquer the world. Their queen has slept for centuries and needs blood to be revived. Hercules also has a run in with some monstrous, stone robots. Steel never had the charisma of Steve Reeves, but this is probably his best film and he does a commendable job in the title role. Beautiful color, 16mm.

BLACK TORMENT (1964) Heather Sears, John Turner, Ann Lynn. A British nobleman is suspected of rape, murder, and witchcraft. He returns to his castle with a new bride. There, he is haunted by his mad twin brother and the ghost of his first wife. A very unusual and interesting gothic chiller. Color, from 16mm.



DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 78 (#DI-78)*

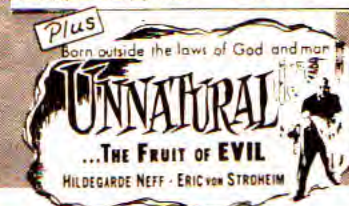
MARRIED TOO YOUNG (1962) Harold Lloyd, Jr., Anthony Dexter, Jana Lund, Marianna Hill. A forgotten Ed Wood film. This was a film without an ending, so Headliner Productions brought in Ed to finish the last 20-25% of the script. Ed was paid cash and wasn't credited in the opening titles. The plot has a pair of high school sweethearts getting married on the sly, then finding the burdens of real life too tough. Trouble comes when they get mixed up in a hot car racket. A tremendous climax and crash. This is probably the highest quality film that Ed ever worked on. A must for all Ed Wood and J.D. collectors. Available exclusively from Sinister Cinema.

WILD GUITAR (1962) Arch Hall, Jr., Arch Hall, Sr., Ray Dennis Steckler. A young Arch, Jr. is given a shot at the big time by the unscrupulous owner of a small record company played by Arch, Sr. (aka William Waters). Steckler steals the show as Sr.'s sleazy right-hand-man. The scene where he brings in a hooker for Jr. is a hoot! Made almost exclusively for the drive-in circuit. From 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 79 (#DI-79)*

LIANE, JUNGLE GODDESS (1956) Marion Michael, Hardy Kruger. A beautiful (and completely topless) white jungle siren is discovered in the wilds of Africa living with a native tribe. It's thought she may be the lost granddaughter of a wealthy Englishman. She's brought back to London for a reunion but finds as much danger in civilization as in the jungle. The story is basically a variation on the Greystoke legend. Michael has to be one of the most beautiful sex kittens of the era. Most definitely rated "R." Transferred from a beautiful color 35mm print.

UNNATURAL (1952) Eric Von Stroheim, Hildegard Neff, Karl Boehm. A fascinating story of a strange scientist who creates a beautiful femme fatale via artificial insemination. Because her heritage is artificial, she appears to have no soul or inborn sense of morality. She brings tragedy to everyone who surrounds her. A beautifully shot, gothic, sci-fi fantasy. From 35mm.



WALK-IN COMBO NO. 2 (#WI-02)*

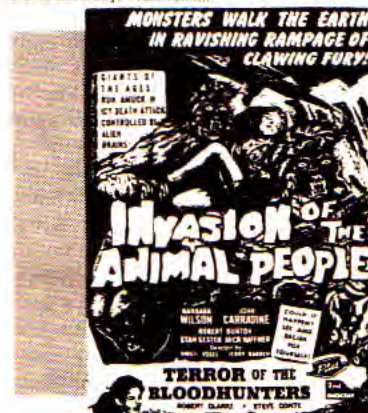
THE SCREAMING SKULL (1958) John Hudson, Peggy Weber, Alex Nicol. A memorable '50s 'B' horror film from the guys at American International. This one's about a lady who's terrorized by the vision of her husband's first wife's skull. A well-paced AIP effort that boasts a tremendous music score. Be ready for the highly shocking, supernatural ending. Terrific! 16mm.

FANTASTIC PUPPET PEOPLE (1958) John Agar, June Kenney, John Hoyt. A '50s drive-in classic. A mad doll-maker has a shrinking machine in his back room that reduces people to a tenth of their size. He's a lonely old wacko that keeps his victims in small glass tubes, taking them out occasionally to ward off the emotional strain of his solitude. Agar, who's been miniaturized himself, rallies the other victims against their giant captor. From 16mm.

DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 80 (#DI-80)*

THE BEAST OF YUCCA FLATS (1961) Tor Johnson, Douglas Meller, Tony Cardoza, Barbara Francis. One of the great "bad" pictures. Tor plays a Russian scientist who's caught in a nuclear blast. The radiation transforms him into a rampaging, desert monster that terrorizes the countryside. Some brief topless nudity is featured in the opening rape scene. From 16mm.

SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN (1962) Koji Tsuruta, Tadao Nakamura, Akihiko Hirata. One of the rarest of all Japanese sci-fi films. Men are being mysteriously murdered by a vengeful madman known as "the Telegian," who uses a matter transmitting device to find his intended victims no matter where they hide. Released in the U.S. in B&W only. From 16mm.



WALK-IN COMBO NO. 3 (#WI-03)*

INVASION OF THE ANIMAL PEOPLE (1961) John Carradine, Robert Burton, Barbara Wilson. Aliens land in Lapland and deposit a giant, furry monster that creates havoc with the local natives. Shot on location in Lapland by an American crew and English speaking cast. Pretty good if you can get by the Jerry Warren inserts that were added later. From 16mm.

TERROR OF THE BLOODHUNTERS (1962) Robert Clarke, Dorothy Haney. Jungle horror as an escaped prisoner faces the terrifying savagery of a ferocious South American tribe. This was played up as a horror film when originally released, although actually a jungle thriller. Another Hall of Blame classic from grade-Z horror director, Jerry Warren. From 16mm.



DRIVE-IN COMBO NO. 81 (#DI-81)*

SHANTY TRAMP (1966) Bill Rogers, produced by K. Gordon Murray. A sleazy evangelist puts the move on a small town's shanty tramp. She makes a move on a local black kid—which almost gets him lynched! Not bad, really. Kind of an "R" rated, sleazy cross between **ELMER GANTTRY** and **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**. Cheap, but fascinating. From 35mm.

SAVAGES FROM HELL (1968) William Katlay, Viola Boyd, Bobbie Byers. The leader of a vicious motorcycle gang kidnaps a farmworker's daughter. He also beats her brother for messing around with his woman. A fairly entertaining "small-town-good-guys-against-the-big-bad-bikers" movie. Color, from 35mm.

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ish blackface and froth at the mouth.) It's clear that a female monster is the culprit, and there's only one actress in each cast who could possibly turn out to be the monster. Characters bustle back and forth, back and froth across dark forests or moors, paying calls on one another, sipping tea, extending dinner invitations and tirelessly jawing away about the "mystery." After about an hour-and-a-half, our heroes finally arrive at the solution (which the viewer knew after the first few minutes). Anthony Hinds scripted both movies under a pseudonym, and the reason for that should be no mystery, either.

The setting for *The Reptile* is Cornwall, England, where the bite of a dimly-seen half-human creature is responsible for turning several bit players into dead minstrels. Ray Barrett, who looks like Rod Taylor's evil twin and plays the brother of one of the dead men, arrives on the scene with his wife (Jennifer Daniel) and moves into the late brother's secluded cottage. The local pub empties out every time Barrett walks in and asks questions, (a) because that's the cliched reaction, and (b) because non-speaking extras cost less than actors. Only barkeep Michael Ripper is willing to furnish a sympathetic ear. Barrett is attacked by a filthy tramp (John Laurie) on the moors, but instead of giving Laurie a good working-over, Barrett invites him home for dinner. Laurie spits out food (in close-up), belches loudly and marks himself as a future victim by *knowing too much*.

Barrett's neighbors are a theologian (Noel Willman) who acts as though he's keeping a Terrible Secret, Willman's enigmatic, elusive daughter (Jacqueline Pearce) and a foreign-looking creep (Marne Maitland) who never changes his clothes or his bored, insipid expression. (People's reactions to Maitland, and the music that plays when he's on-screen, let the viewer know we're supposed to think the little guy is scary.) After endless palaver it's revealed that, years ago in Borneo, Willman antagonized some snake worshippers who have taken revenge by seeing to it that Pearce transforms periodically into a murderous snake woman. "It took a long time, and a great deal of patience, to discover their secret," Willman says about the snake worshippers; the line also describes the plot quite nicely.

Except for Michael Ripper (quite personable in his supporting role), most of the acting is as dreary and formal as the dialogue, and the "shock" scenes are almost completely ineffectual; at one point, a fight scene between Noel Willman and Jennifer Daniel in a burning house is for some reason interrupted by a lengthy shot of Ray Barrett at home, asleep in bed. Hammerheads, whose patience with lethargic movies is matched only by the exaggeration with which they describe them, have dubbed *The Reptile* and *The Plague Of The Zombies* "The Cornwall Classics." Cornball describes *The Reptile* much better. You'll have that figured out in the first half-hour, too.

Reviewed by Tom Weaver

Zombies On Broadway

(1945, RKO) With Wally Brown, Alan Carney, Bela Lugosi, Anne Jeffreys, Sheldon Leonard, Darby Jones, Sir Lancelot. Available from Turner Home Video.

The astounding popularity of Universal's Abbott & Costello comedies prompted RKO's short-lived Brown & Carney series. Ex-vaudevil-

HEE! HEE!
What Ghoulish Glee!

Those lame-brain buddies on a zombie-hunt... and on the spot between a ghastly professor and a ghostly witch-doctor... in the land of the walking dead!

WALLY BROWN • ALAN CARNEY • BELA LUGOSI

ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY

ANNE JEFFREYS • SHELDON LEONARD • FRANK JENKS

Produced by BEN STOLOFF • Directed by GORDON DOUGLAS • Screen Play by LAWRENCE KIMBLE

lians Wally and Alan (who were not a team prior to these films) bore a superficial resemblance to Bud and Lou: Brown was the slender wise-guy, Carney the fat, gullible patsy. Their low-budget comedies were strictly "programmers" designed to play the bottom half of double bills. Some of these efforts turned a profit, but for the most part, this hastily-concocted partnership didn't fool anyone.

In *Zombies On Broadway*, B&C are two press agents sent to the island of San Sebastian with instructions to bring back an honest-to-goodness zombie, who will be used to publicize the opening of gangster Sheldon Leonard's nightclub, "The Zombie Hut." Upon their arrival, they run afoul of zombie expert/mad doctor Bela Lugosi (who, as was often the case, gives a much better performance than the material warrants) and come to the aid of damsel-in-distress Anne Jeffreys.

Zombies is a cut above the average Brown & Carney, and is perhaps the team's best effort, faint

praise that it is. The film is efficiently directed by Gordon Douglas (*Them!*, *Saps At Sea*, *Robin And The Seven Hoods*, *In Like Flint*), and is bolstered tremendously by Lugosi's presence. A little more care than usual seems to have gone into the production; jungle sets from RKO's *Tarzan* series were utilized, and scenes in Lugosi's mansion, also standing sets, are quite impressive.

Of particular interest to horror film fans are the references to Val Lewton's classic *I Walked With A Zombie* (1943). In both pictures, the locale is the island of San Sebastian; additionally, two performers from the Lewton film repeat their roles: Darby Jones as a zombie (employing the same makeup) and Sir Lancelot as a Calypso singer (in fact, the *Fort Holland Calypso Song* from *I Walked With A Zombie* was rewritten as a greeting Lancelot sings to Wally and Alan). though these touches contribute nothing to the overall laugh content, they do help to make *Zombies On Broadway* one of the more intriguing horror comedies.

Brown & Carney have been dismissed as Abbott & Costello imitators, and rightfully so. But in a sense they beat Bud and Lou to their own game. *Zombies On Broadway* employs the services of Bela Lugosi (who is billed above the title along with the comics) a couple of years before A&C did. And the horrors the boys face in *Zombies* are real, as opposed to gangsters masquerading as apparitions in *Hold That Ghost* (1941). One has to wonder if this tepid Brown & Carney lampoon could have served as an inspiration, however slight, for the later Abbott & Costello farces.

Reviewed by Ted Okuda

Teenage Tupelo

(1995) Written, directed & produced by J. Michael McCarthy; associate producer, David F. Friedman; music score by Impala; photographed by Darin Ipema (in black & white w/color sequences); presented by Something Weird Video.

For some important background information on this movie, turn to page 72 of *Cult Movies* #16 which is an in-depth interview with the filmmaker, J. Michael McCarthy, who made *Teenage Tupelo* as sort of a weird and whacked-out tribute to the mother he never knew. Living in Memphis, he gathered his cast and crew on Southern locations and made a "home" movie about the sexy, hot-blooded young girl of Tupelo, Mississippi whom he imagines conceived him with the help of a sleazy Elvis-type named Johnny Tu-Note, played to a seedy turn by Hugh B. Brooks. It's set in 1962.

Unlike a lot of "shoe-string" epics made by young would-be auteurs, this movie works on most every level for three reasons: To begin with,

the black & white photography has a bleak yet clear quality that captures the dark underbelly of the South; secondly, McCarthy never lets the exploitative taboos of his scenario block his way; he gives his fantasies regarding the mother he didn't know full reign—McCarthy was a comic book artist for seven years before he became a filmmaker, therefore he gives his footage a tough and gritty "graphic novel" aura which almost but never quite surpasses the surreal (we open on a close-up of Johnny Tu-Note's patterned boxer shorts as he's pumping McCarthy's mom in a treehouse); the third reason is "starlet" D'Lana Tunnell, who enacts the dual roles of McCarthy's mom and man-hating stripper "Topsy Turvy." Admittedly, McCarthy didn't hire D'Lana for her acting ability. One look at her and you'll know *precisely* why he hired her, yet she displays more raw, credible talent than you'd imagine. More important, she emotes for the camera like a \$100-an-hour nympho model. Even when all she's doing is a lazy daytime stroll through the cemetery, she's sexy with a Capital "S!"

When Johnny Tu-Note knocks her up then scorns her, she doesn't take it lying down. She tears into Johnny's newest squeeze, setting off one holy mother of a catfight. Shortly, she's befriended by three man-hating dykes (Kristen Hobbs, Dawn Ashcroft & Sophie Couch) who settle things up with Johnny in an abandoned railway car.

There are a number of color fantasy sequences and an actual baby birth (stock) plus a raw, effective rock score, plus D'Lana and her hip, man-hating girl group cruising moodily through the night in a '56 Chevy, on the prowl for an expert to

remove the "Tu-Note" tattoo from D'Lana's ripe young ass.

Teenage Tupelo is teenaged good-bad girls, atom bombs & pinstripping, fishnets & garters, and plenty of surreal, trashy, visual backwoods poetry. It might not be for all tastes, but — Hey, I kinda find myself wishing I'd made this sucker, and that's a feeling that doesn't come down the pike too often.

Reviewed by Spider Subke

Kilma, Queen Of The Jungle

(1975) Produced (in color) as a Spanish-South American co-production; presented (on video) by Sinister Cinema.

This low-budget adventure opens with a gang of nefarious pirates taking over a ship, whose navigator takes off in a longboat and washes ashore on an unknown island. He witnesses a confrontation between some visiting natives and the amazon women who dominate the island. The women win.

Dan Robinson (Frank Brann), the navigator, meets and saves the life of Kilma (Eva Miller), the amazon queen. Naturally, they fall in love, and naturally, there's a rival amazon (Claudia Grauy) who also has a thing for Dan. There's gold in them thar islands, you know, and Dan's pirate buddies come back to get it. The location's nice and the amazons are really luscious, although there's no such thing as nudity in this one. The movie's at its liveliest when the pirates are around (you can even hear them singing "Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum!"). The head villain (the pirate chief) is a burly and slightly disfigured brigand named Jack One-

(continued)

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Eye, and he's a riot!

There's seven a science fiction element to the plot for those who need it. Seems that generations of the amazons have been guarding a huge glowing jewel supposedly left in their keeping by aliens who visited our planet a long time ago. The English dubbing isn't bad and Sinister Cinema's transfer is first-rate. But there's a horse in this movie, a black one who answers to the name "Fury," and this turkey is way too cute for his own good.

Reviewed by Spider Subke

Tanya's Island

(A IFEX-FBX Release — 1980) Director: Alfred Sole. Producer and writer: Pierre Brousseau.

Cast: D.D. Winters, Richard Sargent, Don McCloud.

Tanya's Island sounds like B-movie fare from the forties — a girl on an island falls romantically for an ape. But director Alfred Sole (*Alice Sweet Alice*) isn't going to succumb to any of the old exploitation conventions (just new ones), like adding tons of nudity).

Instead, he intentionally goes the art school, "meaningful" route, and turns a potential jungle tits-and-fur movie into a pretentious, psychotronic classic.

The film's best feature is D.D. Winters, as Tanya, who plays a TV announcer (for no good reason), and whose dark beauty immediately reminds the viewer of Apollonia (*Purple Rain*), only without the huge tits. No matter: quality is made up for with quantity, as once she and her boyfriend, named Lobo (played by Richard Sargent) find themselves on a "deserted" island so he can paint (he's the temperamental artist-type, see) she takes to wearing things that have nothing to do with clothes.

She also rides horseback, collects coconuts, and eventually discovers the island's other inhabitant, a gorilla with a beautiful long coat of hair and blue eyes. Quickly nicknamed "Blue," (and played by mime Don McCloud), the gentle creature turns out to have a crush on Tanya. You would, too, watching her run around like that.

The ape suit is another marvel from Rick Baker and Rob Bottin [working together before they had a falling-out over competing werewolf projects in 1981 (*American Werewolf In London* and *The Howling*)]. Soon enough, Lobo becomes jealous of Tanya's fondness for the sensitive ape, and unfortunately the movie seems more interested in Lobo's transformation from temperamental artist to jealous animal, than in the exact nature of the D.D. Winters/ape relationship.

His island idyll threatened, Lobo builds a cage to capture Blue. Eventually the two humans end up trapped behind a fortress wall (built entirely of bamboo — fast work, Lobo!), everyone acts stupid, and the point, none too subtly, is made: jealousy makes men into animals, even more so than the animal causing it.

And it isn't "beauty killed the beast" at the end, either — director Sole's themes are hopelessly muddled by that time. Instead, Blue liberates Tanya and attacks her, raping her from behind! (He learned it from watching Lobo!) And then — she wakes up! It was all a dream!

No, it doesn't make much sense, and Sole's arty flashbacks and solarized light effects keep the proceedings on the level of a Pia Zadora movie. He



Tanya's Island

must have had second thoughts himself, as there's no director's credit on the video version of the film!

Sensuous photos and a pre-review of this film appeared in *Cinefantastique* in the Summer 1980 issue, but the movie subsequently disappeared without a trace. Its schizo patina of arty sleaze, and (probably unauthorized) shots of *Mighty Joe Young* on a TV monitor, no doubt conspired to keep it off cable, and after a momentary release on video on the Simitar label, out of print.

Reviewed by Roger Leatherwood

Whale God

Whale God, a film released in 1962 by the Daiei Company Limited, is one of the more obscure Japanese monster movies. It is available on home video in Japan only as part of a collection of lesser-known science fiction films, and it has never been shown in theaters or broadcast on television in the United States.

However, a number of well-known individuals did work on the movie.

The most notable member of the cast is Takashi Shimura. He is best known as Kambei, the leader of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954), and Kyohei Yamane, the paleontologist in *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* (1954), but he also appears in *Rashomon* (1950), *The Mysterians* (1957), *Yojimbo* (1961) and many other films. Mr. Shimura

plays the village leader in *Whale God*, and as always, he gives a superb performance.

Kojiro Hongo, whom fans of Japanese monster movies know as fortune hunter Kasuke in *Gamera VS. Barugon* (1966), chief engineer Shiro Tsutsumi in *Gamera VS. Gaos* (1967) and scoutmaster Nobuhiko Shimada in *Destroy All Planets* (1968), also is in *Whale God*. Mr. Hongo plays Shaki, the person who takes on the whale at the end of the movie, and his performance is by far the best one he ever gave for a monster film.

Akira Ifukube's score is very good, but it is not one of his best. The themes are affecting enough, but they just are not as memorable as those in *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters*, *Godzilla VS. Mothra* (1964), *Destroy All Monsters* (1968) and so on.

The special effects could be better. Most of the shots of the body of the whale are not very convincing. However, some of the close-ups of its head are fairly believable.

Whale God, like Daiei's *Gamera* (1965), is in black and white.

It is possible that the film initially was inspired by *Moby Dick*, but there are few similarities between the two works. Herman Melville's novel focuses on the character of Captain Ahab, but *Whale God* is a morality play that espouses the virtues of self-sacrifice.

The movie has yet to be released on VHS tape or laserdisc in the United States. However, with the resurgence in interest in giant monster films that has been brought about by the recent release of a number of new *Godzilla* movies, it is possible that some American home video company will approach Daiei with the idea of releasing *Whale God* in the near future.

Reviewed by David Milner

Prehysteria

Directed by Charles Band. Dinosaur FX by David Allens.

Prehysteria is one of the latest films from Full Moon Entertainment, more specifically from their "Moonbeam" division of family oriented films.

First, the staples: There is a family, complete with an obnoxious ten-year-old and his bratty sister, a widowed father, and of course, the family dog. As far as the story goes there's an ancient tomb with dinosaur eggs, a stereotypical villain, and very little surprise, which brings us to the dinos themselves...

Although David Allens stop-motion effects are quite good the "plot's" use of the dinosaurs makes it a rather wasted effort. For the hackneyed reason that they were frozen for seventy million years the saurians remain the size of household pets. They also behave like cartoon characters in that they mischievously get into trouble and are extremely anthropomorphic. In one scene the *Tyrannosaurus* actually dances to Rock and Roll music, which is — no, it is unbearable. These creatures are *not* dinosaurs!

In trying to emulate the G and PG movies from Walt Disney (which Charles Band, the director, admits in the "making of" at the end of the tape) Moonbeam's effort is blatantly unoriginal, which would be at least okay if the characters in the film were interesting. Yet the biggest problem of all is that *Prehysteria* is too childish for kids.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindenmuth

The Rocketeer

Walt Disney Home Video, 1993. Starring: Bill Campbell, Alan Arkin, Timothy Dalton, Paul Sorvino and Terry O'Quinn. Directed by Joe Johnston.

The perfect summer, action-fantasy film.

Set in the late 1930s, *The Rocketeer* concerns itself with the adventures of Cliff Secord, a small-time aviator with a local air show, hoping along with his trusty mechanic Peevy to get his Gee Bee plane into national competition.

His life is endlessly complicated when he finds the prototype of an experimental rocket pack. Soon the FBI, Howard Hughes, racketeers, Nazis and various interested parties are in hot pursuit, with Secord struggling to keep one step ahead of both sides of the law. Secord adopts the identity of the Rocketeer as part of his air show routine, but before long finds his alter ego battling fifth columnists aboard burning airships high over pre-war America.

The Rocketeer scores high points in every category. A triumph of art design, it captures perfectly the sleek style and giddy spirit of the late 1930s. In detailed bric-a-brac, it surpasses such period achievements as *Murder On The Orient Express*, *Chinatown*, and the *Phibes* films; even the Rocketeer's helmet is a perfect evocation of the period's streamlined art deco style. Little details, such as a mock-up of a 1939 World's Fair Guidebook destroyed by O'Quinn's Howard Hughes, featuring rocket-pack aviators circling the Trylon and Perisphere, bring this Golden Age of American Pop Culture to glorious life. Not to be missed either is a propaganda cartoon stolen from the

Nazis, detailing an invasion of America by rocket-wearing soldiers, or the trip to a movie studio with sets more than mindful of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

The cast performs with a jaunty enthusiasm, with Dalton and Arkin the standouts. As film idol-Nazi spy Neville Sinclair, Dalton performs with a sense of style and fun completely missing from his turn as James Bond. Too young for his role by decades, Arkin nonetheless embodies Peevy with a sincere, avuncular charm. You can believe Arkin as Campbell's friend and father-figure, and, more importantly, as a mechanic brilliant enough to perfect the Howard Hughes rocket pack.

Bill Campbell is not to be slighted for his performance as Secord — he manages to invest more into the character than is evident on first viewing. And Sorvino's ultimately patriotic gangster lends amusing, and able, support. Jennifer Connelly shines in the thankless role of the heroine, managing to play the part rather than doing the simple walk-through most actresses would have offered.

Joe Johnston's direction never falters. The film moves at the same brisk clip as some of the best '30s adventure films (*Too Hot To Handle*, *China Seas*), and director Johnston (*Honey, I Shrunk The Kids* and the recent *Jumanji*) manages to get real results with bright images and period decor. He stocks the film with cinema in-jokes, including as villainous henchman an actor made-up to be a deadringer for *Cult Movies* favorite Rondo Hatton. The dirigible finale would have been a mere special effects set-piece in the hands of a less confident director — Johnston keeps most of the action inside the airship before the fiery finale. There the con-

frontation between Campbell and Dalton turns to a real grudge match, and both actors attack one another with an aggressive brio.

James Horner's score is breezy. Also present is Cole Porter's delightful *Begin the Beguine*, warbled effectively by a woman who so eerily captures the look of a '30s chanteuse as to be almost disturbing. The musical number's setting, the South Seas Club, is incredibly evocative of the sometimes zany designs incorporated in '30s cafe society, and a great venue for some of the film's funniest and most action-packed moments.

The screenplay by Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo captures the period well. To its credit, the film never degenerates into a story about a rocket pack, or simply become an excuse for special effects. Rather, the narrative manages to focus on Campbell's Secord, and how the discovery of this wondrous gizmo changes his life, and the lives of those around him. For managing to maintain a human focus in the midst of all the action, the film in an anomaly on the contemporary action film scene.

The concept and characterization was there for the taking in Dave Stevens' *Rocketeer* comic feature. A comic for connoisseurs, it managed to breathe new life and enthusiasm into the medium by returning comics to the time of their roots, and making the whole thing fun again. Campbell actually looks like the Secord in Stevens' strip, and the artist himself does a brief cameo turn as a Nazi test-pilot for the rocket pack.

Perhaps the greatest triumph of *The Rocketeer* is its overall tone. With its innocence and charm,

(continued on page 88)

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Mexican Vampire Films (Have Teeth Will Suck)

by Brian Moran

SANTO--NOELIA NOEL

ALDO MONTI--ROBERTO G. RIVERA

CARLOS AGOSTI



While vampire films have never been my favorite sub-genre in the horror field, I can understand why they have such a widespread appeal. Vampires are both frightening and highly erotic. They are sometimes sympathetic, but often represent evil incarnate. In fact, of all mythical monsters, they are probably the most complex. But while vampire films can be both terrifying and sensuous, they can also be the most predictable of horror films. The vampire legends are well-known and so ingrained in our minds that most vampire movies tend to be quite similar.

Unless, of course, you happen to be watching a Mexican vampire film. Some south-of-the-border vampires are sensitive to sound while a few can disappear at will. Some can be killed by fire or platinum bullets, while others will rise from their coffins with stakes firmly planted in their hearts.

The first, and best known, of the Mexican vampire films is *El Vampiro*, shot in 1957. This is considered by many critics (at least those who deign to acknowledge Mexican cinema as something worthy of coverage) as the best Mexican vampire film. In fact, in a recent survey of Mexican critics, it was voted the best of all horror films made in Mexico and one of only two that made the top 100 list of all Mexican movies.



German Robles plays Count Lavud, the role he's probably best remembered for. He is certainly the most important of all Mexican vampires. *El Vampiro* is basically a straightforward vampire film with great atmosphere and good performances. Lavud is trying to resurrect his long-dead, vampiristic ancestor. Standing in his way are a young woman, Marta (Adriana Welter) and a doctor, Enrique (Abel Salazar), both of whom had recently arrived to see Marta's sick aunt, Maria Teresa (Alicia Montoya). They arrive too late, finding her already dead and buried. Marta's other aunt, Eloisa (Carmen Montego) has become a vampire herself and is in league with the Count. Fortunately, Maria Teresa has only feigned her death and several times steps in to aid her niece. In the end, Enrique stakes the Count, Maria Teresa destroys her evil sister and the young couple embrace at a train station.

The film was highly successful and was immediately followed by a sequel, *Ataud del Vampiro* (*Vampire's Coffin*, also 1957), with much the same cast. Although there's far more comic relief in the second film, it's also quite enjoyable. Doctor Mendoza (Enrique's colleague) has Count Lavud's (Robles) body exhumed and brought to him, so he can perform some scientific experiments. Unfortunately, the grave robber he hired to help him wants the Count's pendant and removes the stake from the vampire's heart to get it. Lavud comes back to life and puts the crook under his spell. He sets up shop in a wax museum and goes about making Marta his bride. Once again, Maria Teresa tries to help her niece, but this time, she gets shut into a Virgin of Nuremberg (spiked coffin) for her trouble. After several more deaths, the kidnapping of Marta (Welter) at a music hall and a chase scene leading back to the wax museum, Enrique (Salazar) spears the flying vampire-bat and once again, walks off with Marta.

In both films, Salazar plays the hero by default, doing nothing particularly heroic until the final scenes. In fact, he is one of the last of the main characters to understand what's going on. Montoya plays a much more sympathetic character, whose violent death is unexpected. Salazar went on to play more semi-heroic heroes in *Maldicion de la Llorona* (*Curse of the Crying Woman*), *Hombre y el Monstruo* (*Man and the Monster*) and *Cabeza Viviente* (*Living Head*). While he's adequate in these roles, he's much more fun playing the heavy, as he did in the infamous, *El Baron del Terror* (*The Brainiac*).

While in Mexico recently, I was able to speak with Robles, and he mentioned the possibility of a long overdue, third installment in the *El Vampiro* saga.

Robles donned fangs for the third time in 1957 in, *Castillo de los Monstruos*, an *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*-like comedy set in a haunted house. This amusing film starred Clavillazo and Evangelina Elizondo being menaced by a gaggle of creatures, including a vampire. Robles' role is little more than a walk-on. He hangs around only long enough to get fried in the rays of the sun.

For his next part with some teeth to it, Robles played the title-vampire in *Maldicion de Nostradamus* (*Curse of Nostradamus*), the first of four features edited together from a horror-series of the same name. *Nostradamus y el Destructor de Monstruos* (*Monster Demolisher*), *Nostradamus*



el Genio de las Tinieblas (*Genii of Darkness*) and *Sangre de Nostradamus* (*Blood of Nostradamus*) all produced in 1959, are the other three from this quartet. The vampire's rationale for mass murder is pretty weak. He will kill various victims until scientist Duran admits that vampirism exists.

Duran and his assistant must be the most ineffectual heroes in the history of cinema. Nostradamus warns them in advance who he will murder next. Time and time again, they predict that this time Nostradamus is sure to fail, only to discover (much to their surprise) that he has dispatched another victim. The scientist does eventually perfect a sound wave machine, which interferes with the vampire's built-in sonar (remember, he's part bat) and this eventually terminates him. While a little silly at times (a hunchback named Leo?) these four films have a surreal charm and are always good fun.

As a footnote to his vampiric career, German Robles also appeared in *Vampiros de Coyoacan* (1973). However, this time, Robles switches sides and joins masked-wrestlers Mil Mascaras and Superzan in trying to destroy the undead monsters. And what an assortment of monsters they are! The main vampire can change into a normal flying bat as well as a werewolf-like man-bat. He's assisted by a bald, wrestling vampire, (played by wrestler/actor Frankenstein), by two semi-normal male vampires and, in what I believe to be a cinematic first, a small army of vampire-midgets. In the end, Robles and the two wrestlers burn the vampires' coffins, giving them no shelter from the rising sun. So at dawn, the evil creatures all fade away.

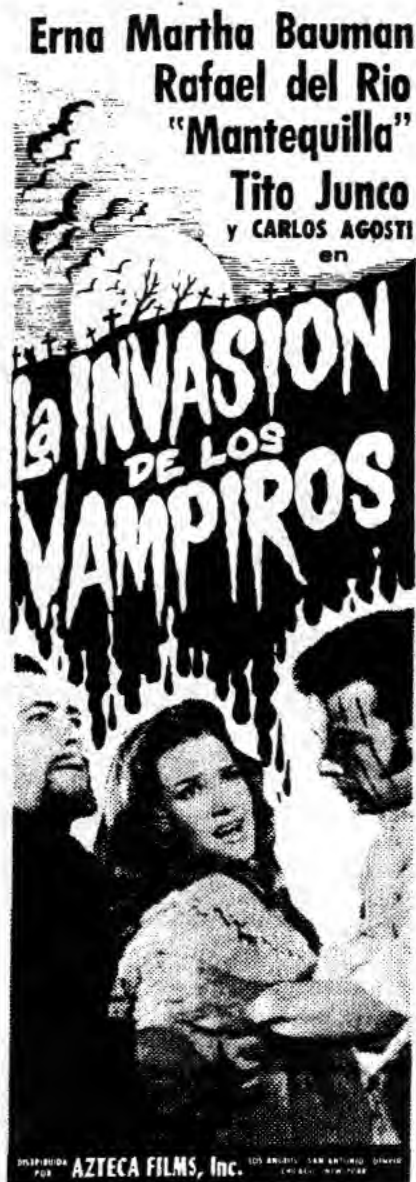
Following the Robles films to the screen in 1960

was *Mundo de los Vampiros* (*World of the Vampires*). It's as different from the earlier efforts as it can be. While *El Vampiro* was fairly understated, with many of the usual vampire trappings, *Mundo* is in a mundo all its own. This surreal film has an organ-playing lead vampire (Guillermo Murray) who's aided by a troop of underling-vampires with giant ears and rodent faces [similar to the doll-faces in *Munecos Infernales* (*Curse of the Doll People*)]. There are also human sacrifices, family curses and a mute, hunch-backed servant. Another oddity is the vampire-victims' habit of growing hair all over their bodies. The very first bite gives them hairy hands (leading their friends to wonder whether they aren't spending a little too much time alone with *Playboy* magazine).

The plot concerns the vampire's efforts to wipe out the descendants of the Kolman family, which consists of a professor and his two nieces. One of the girls (Silvia Fournier) doesn't like the idea, but the other (Erna Martha Bauman) is eager to be sucked. Incredibly, the hero (Mauricio Garces) is finally able to destroy most of the monsters by simply "playing the organ." Murray is killed by being thrown into a pit filled with wooden spikes, an odd thing for a vampire to keep in his lair.

According to every film book I've seen, the next vampire film is *Invasion de los Vampiros* (*Invasion of the Vampires* — 1961). However, there is some evidence that its "sequel," *Vampiro Sangriento* (*Bloody Vampire* — 1962), was actually made first. At the end of *Invasion*, the vampire (Carlos Agosti) and his mistress Frau Hildegard both die. Yet both are very much alive at both the start and finish of *Sangriento*.

(continued)



Whichever came first, the two films are part of the same story. We follow the exploits of the evil Count Frankenhause (Carlos Agosti) and those who would destroy him. In *Vampiro Sangriento*, the Cagliostro family is dedicated to destroying the vampire. Count Cagliostro develops a serum that kills vampires when injected into their veins, while his daughter Anna goes undercover, working as a servant in the Frankenhause mansion. In the end, Anna is rescued from a fate worse than death and Frankenhause escapes from a fate worse than undeath. Nothing else much happens in the film and its inconclusive ending leaves much to be desired.

Invasion de los Vampiros is by far the more entertaining of the two films. (It's my favorite Mexican vampire movie). It concerns Dr. Albarán's efforts to do what Cagliostro failed to accomplish earlier. There are some wonderfully atmospheric (and disquieting) scenes, an unusual plot and a remarkable ending; After Agosti is killed, dozens of his victims rise from their coffins (with stakes still in their hearts) and besiege the castle where the good guys are held up. These closing scenes have a claustrophobic quality similar to that in *Night of the Living Dead*.

Adding to the enjoyment of these two efforts is



the silly bunny-eared vampire bat (you have to see it to believe it) and the wonderfully stilted, English-dubbed dialog, typical of all the K. Gordon Murray imports of this period.

Some of the other serious vampire films were: *Nave de los Monstruos* (*Ship of the Monsters* — 1959), the first appearance by Lorena Velazquez, as a vampire, in a horror film; *Huella Macabra* (*Macabre Footsteps* — 1962) with its vampire-child; *Charro de las Calaveras* (*Riders of the Skulls* — 1965); a bizarre, episodic film that has three short horror-stories strung together, the second of which features an incredibly ugly vampire; *Imperio de Dracula* (*Empire of Dracula* — 1966), the first full-color vampire film; *Endemoniada* (*Demon* — 1967), a semi-vampiric story and the first Mexican vampire film to feature nudity; and *Chanoc vs el Tigre y el Vampiro* (*Chanoc vs the Tiger and the Vampire* — 1971).

Vampires were also popular adversaries for masked wrestlers. For those uninitiated in the masked wrestler genre, Mexico's answer to Ameri-

can super heroes is a group of masked men, most of whom were actual wrestlers in real life (the same characters they portrayed on the screen). Santo, Blue Demon and Mil Mascaras weren't just movie characters. They were always Santo, Blue Demon and Mil Mascaras, whether performing in the ring, starring on the screen or grabbing a bite to eat at a local restaurant. They always wore their masks out in public. Mexican wrestlers are as close to living, breathing Batman-like heroes the world has ever known.

Santo (the Saint) alone battled vampires six times.

The wrestler-vampire films are: *Santo vs las Mujeres Vampiro* (*Santo vs the Vampire Women* — 1962); *Baron Brakola* (1965, with Santo); *Las Vampiras* (1967, with Mil Mascaras); *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula* (1968, plus the sex version, *Vampiro y el Sexo*); *Santo y Blue Demon contra los Monstruos* (*Santo and Blue Demon vs the Monsters* — 1969); *Santo en la Venganza de las Mujeres Vampiro* (*Vengeance of the Vampire*

Cine y Fecha

Sólo un hombre de acero...
de agilidad de pantera, es
capaz de luchar contra las
MUJERES VAMPIRO...
y ese hombre es...
¡SANTO!



FILMADORA PANAMERICANA, S.A. *Presenta*



SANTO EL ENMASCARADO DE PLATA

LORENA VELAZQUEZ
JAIME FERNANDEZ MARIA DUVAL
AUGUSTO BENEDICO
OFELIA MONTESCO

SANTO vs. LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO

XAVIER LOYA
FERNANDO OSES
LOBO NEGRO • FRANKENSTEIN

GOVERNADOR GALINDO • RAY MENDOZA
BLACK MAMBO
BOBBY BOHLEZ • EDUARDO BONADA

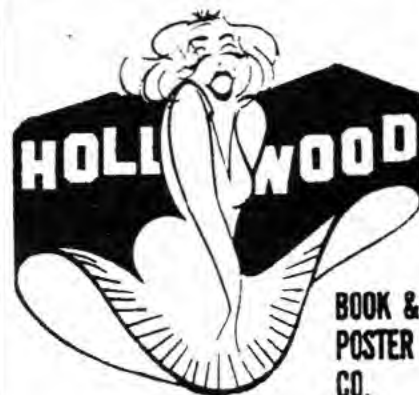
ALFONSO CORONA BLAKE

Women — 1970); Santo y Blue Demon vs Dracula y el Hombre Lobo (Santo and Blue Demon vs Dracula and the Wolf Man — 1972); Vampiros de Coyoacan (Vampires of Coyoacan — 1973, with Mil Mascaras and Superzan); and Chanoc y el Hijo del Santo contra los Vampiros Asesinos (Chanoc and the Son of Santo vs the Killer Vampires — 1981).

Vampires were also apt to show up in comedies as shown by: Castillo de los Monstruos (Castle of the Monsters — 1957); Frankenstein el Vampiro y Cia (Frankenstein, the Vampire and Me — 1961); Echenme al Vampiro (Bring Me the Vampire — 1961); Capulina contra los Vampiros (Capulina vs the Vampires — 1970); Capulina contra los Monstruos (Capulina vs the Monsters — 1973); Chabela y Pepito contra los Monstruos (Chabela and Pepito vs the Monsters — 1973); and a large number of more recent examples.

For those of you who'd like a further taste of Mexican horror and masked wrestler films (I know there's one of you out there somewhere) you can subscribe to *Santo Street*, the world's most widely read publication with Santo in the title. In each issue of this quarterly newsletter there are articles, interviews, photos and contests on Mexican monsters (Brainiac, Aztec Mummy, vampires, etc.) and masked wrestlers (Santo, Blue Demon, Mil Mascaras, the Wrestling Women, etc.). Send \$10 for one year (\$15 foreign) or throw away even more money and send \$25 for a three year subscription (\$40 foreign). Send checks or money orders (foreign subscribers must send money orders payable in US dollars) to: Brian Moran, P.O. Box 561307, Orlando, FL 32856.

Mexican vampire films show no signs of disappearing, so it might be best to keep those stakes handy! ■



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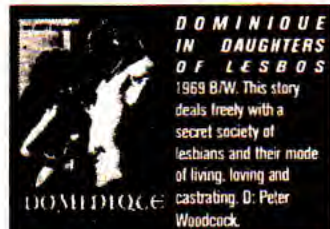
SHOCKING BLUE CINEMA!

VINTAGE 1960'S & 70'S EXPLOITATION-CINEMA

BUNNY YEAGER'S NUDE CAMERA 1963 C. Maria Stinger. Bunny Yeager photographs gorgeous glamour models in fun filled nude cutie! D: Barry Mahon.

CARGO OF LOVE 1968 B/W. Evil "Lupo" sisters lure young maidens to white slave racket in sadistic thrill a minute New York roughie! By Anton Holden director of "Aroused".

CHRISTINE KEELER AFFAIR 1964 B/W. Yvonne Buckingham, John Drew Barrymore. Beautiful teen demimondaine scandalizes British jet set. Banned in England!



DOMINIQUE IN DAUGHTERS OF LESBOS 1969 B/W. This story deals freely with a secret society of lesbians and their mode of living, loving and castrating. D: Peter Woodcock.

MY BODY HUNGERS 1967 B/W. Black garter belt is the instrument of depraved lust and murder. D: Joe Sarno. Original jazz score by Stan Free.

I WANT YOU 1968

B/W. Chelee Films. Sleazy madam blackmails perverse clientele in brutal roughie. D: Sam S. Catah. Surl/funeral score by Luristan Inc.



ONCE UPON A BODY 1969 B/W. Chelee Films. Twisted roughie features callous lesbians, sadistic beatings, homosexuality, electrocution, frenzied orgies & psychedelic jazz score by Luristan Inc.

D: Sam S. Catah

ONE NAKED NIGHT 1963 B/W. Audrey Campbell. NYC degenerates corrupt small town virgin. D: Al Viola Jazz score by Chet McIntyre.



FUEGO 1969 C. Voluptuous Isabel Sarli lusts for sex & suicide! Armando Bo's erotic masterpiece. (Argentina's Russ Meyer). Original score by Armando Bo & Humberto Uriarte. Best copy available.

SECRETS OF THE NAZI CRIMINALS 1962

B/W. Penetrating analysis of Hitler's rise to power. Extensive background on Himmler, Goering, Hess, Goebbels & others. Exhaustive detail on their gigantic murder operation - complete with corpses, statistics & maps. Minerva Int. (Sweden) Narrated in English. a.k.a. MEIN KAMPH II



THE SEX CYCLE

1966 B/W. Janet, with her new power of domination leads men and women down a path of destruction. D: Joe Sarno.



1000 SHAPES OF FEMALE 1963 C. Audrey Campbell. Beatnik coffee house spoof with pre-tentious Greenwich Village artists. D: Barry Mahon.



SOME LIKE IT VIOLENT 1968 B/W. Big time sadistic pimp develops computerized prostitution racket. Barry Mahon's best! D: Kemal Horulu.

VIRGIN COWBOY 1975 C. Liz Renay, Bridgette Maier. Prostitute falls for virgin cowboy in violent sexploitation western. Cal Vista release.



TORTURED FEMALES 1965 B/W. Wildcat strippers in leopard skin lingerie whipped without mercy! Mitam's 1st release.

VINTAGE 1970'S XXX CINEMA

AGONY OF LASH, LACE & LOVE 1975 C.

Sadistic rubber freak tortures femme hostage! **ANAL ASSAULT** 1970-75 C. Bridgette Maier. Documents brutal anal eroticism. Includes "DEEP ARSE", loops by Lasse Braun, NAZI RAPISTS & many more.

ANAL ULTRA VIXENS 1970's C. Linda McDowell, Vanessa Del Rio, Lisa Deleuw, John Holmes. Collection of anal loops featuring SUPER BUSTY starlets!

ANGEL ON FIRE 1975 C. Despicable womanizer returns as ball busting female. D: Roberta Findlay.

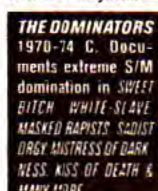


THE CHEATERS 1973 C. Creep in ski mask rapes sleazy biker chick, while cycle gang disciplines busty mamas! Go go boots and belbottoms galore!

CITY WOMEN 1972 C. Rene Bond. Come away with sensual city women as their passionate fantasies come to life.

CUMMING ATTRACTIONS 1970-75 C. USCHI DIGARD. Agony of Lash, Lace & Love. Prey of a Call Girl. Sensations. Mistress of Depravity. Violation of Claudia. Last Step Down. Dark Dreams. Too Young Too Care & 20 more 1st time on video XXX trailers.

THE DEVIL INSIDE HER 1976 C. ANNIE SPRINKLE endures heavy G/S humiliation in story of satanic mayhem. D: Zebedy Colt!



THE DOMINATORS 1970-74 C. Documents extreme S/M domination in SWEET BITCH, WHITE SLAVE, MASKED RAPISTS, SADIST, DRUG MISTRESS OF DARKNESS, KISS OF DEATH & MANY MORE

THE ELEVATOR 1972 C. Young & fresh CANDY SAMPLES devours everything in sight!



FORBIDDEN SEXUALITY 1970-75 C. Documents bizarre sexuality: Necrophilia, Nuns, Barbarism, Brute Force, Dangerous Strangers, Domination, Rape, Blood-letting, Hooks, Amputees, G/S & F/F. WARNING: Attacks your senses with brutal, shocking imagery!

HOUSE OF DE SADE 1975 C. Vanessa Del Rio. Seance happy swingers unleash the sadistic spirit of De Sade. Features extreme pain rituals and anal abuse. Pink Floyd soundtrack.

INCREDIBLE BODY SNATCHERS 1972 C. Hollywood drifters rape mother & virgin daughter in blood splattered color! D: Harry Hopper.

KITTY'S PLEASURE PALACE 1971 C. Girl trauma tized by Nazi brutality assassinates rapist, serial killer and necrophile. Big budget special effects! D: Jack Genera.

HARD GORE

1973 C. The ULTIMATE big budget. BLOOD splattered hardcore roughie! Hospital death cult terrorize teenage Maria with Necrophilia, Meathooks, Castration, Lesbo Nurses, Deathdreams, Decapitation, Throat Slashings, Blood Orgies & more. Do not miss this film!



THE LUMBERJACKS 1971 C. Rednecks attack hippie and rape his woman. Hippie seeks vengeance!

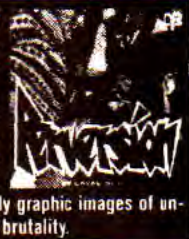
MILLIE'S HOMECOMING 1972 C. Tina Russell Dolly Sharpe. Petite maid pampers Lady Zazu & her freak friends!

PERVERTED PASSION 1974 C. Sex degenerate murders Hollywood nobodies in black humored portrait of society's psycho trash running amok. Absolute classic! D: RAY DENNIS STECKLER using pseudonym Cindy Lou Sutters.

HISTORY OF

RAPE 1970-75

C. Documents rape in XXX cinema. Includes TERRORIZED VIRGIN, Lasse Braun's VIOLENCE & more. WARNING: Highly graphic images of unrelenting sexual brutality.



SAN FRANCISCO BALL 1971 C. Vicious rapists terrorize 3 beautiful women in vile, taste filled roughie. D: Jack Genera.

SATAN'S SEX SLAVES 1971 C. Satan hypnotizes sex starved hippies. "They traded one moment of ecstasy for an eternity of pain!"

SEX & THE SINGLE VAMPIRE 1970 C. Sandy Dempsey, John Holmes sinks his teeth into sex crazed swingers. ED WOOD style, spooky horror.

TERRI'S REVENGE 1975 C. Terri Hall. Radical New York women start W.A.R. (Women Against Rape), then take vengeance on male abusers. Rabid exploitation by Zebedy Colt!

WHAT ABOUT JANE 1971 C. Marsha Strawberry (Busty). Captivating, surreal portrait of a lonely housewife's search for sexual fulfillment. High budget, beautifully photographed. An Alpha Blue favorite.

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JACK ARNOLD: THE INCREDIBLE THINKING MAN

by Ron Ford

Jack Arnold was a consummate storyteller, and a painstaking technician. He is most known for directing some of the best loved science fiction films of the Cold War fifties; but he worked in virtually every genre in his busy career. No matter what type of material he worked with, he always infused it with taste and intelligence.

Jack's parents were Russian immigrants. His father, Mathew Waks (pronounced "Vox"), so the story goes, walked across Russia as a boy in order to avoid persecution solely based on his Jewish heritage. He eventually made it to the United States and established himself as a streetcar conductor in New Haven, Connecticut. It was there he met and married Jack's mother, Edith Pagovitch Waks. Jack was born October 14, 1912, on the kitchen table.



Jack Arnold (second from right) directs Grant Williams in a scene from *The Incredible Shrinking Man*.

Matthew gave up street car conducting. Edith's mother gave the couple a candy concession at the local Bijou as a wedding present. It's not hard to imagine the young Jack Arnold Waks getting his first taste for the movies as he sat for hours in the Bijou.

Later, Matthew became a successful stockbroker, but lost all of his money in the stock-market crash in 1929. Somehow, through all of this, young Jack developed an interest in show business; even though it was his sister, Sylvia, who was given the piano and voice lessons. Jack would listen outside the door when she received her lessons, and then practice on his own afterward. Sylvia went on to a minor career on the stage, culminating in a part on Broadway in the revue, *Jimmy Durante and Six Girls*.

Jack's friend Larry Nadel had an uncle who had been a comic in vaudeville. He inspired the boys, and they developed their own comedy routines and tried them out in any amateur show that would have them. After high school Jack enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts where he trained along side Hume Cronyn and Garson Kanin.

Jack started as an actor. His first big break came when famed Yiddish actor Jacob Adler cast him as the son in *Yoshe Kalb*. Later, he replaced Garson Kanin in George Abbott's production of *Three Men on a Horse* on Broadway. He understudied Gene Kelly in *The Time of Your Life*. He toured London with *Three Men on a Horse*, and managed to act in a few films while there. But perhaps his greatest moment as an actor (at least from our point of view) came in 1947 when he was cast in the dark comedy *Three Indelicate Ladies*, in which he shared the boards with a young Ray Walston and an aging Bela Lugosi!

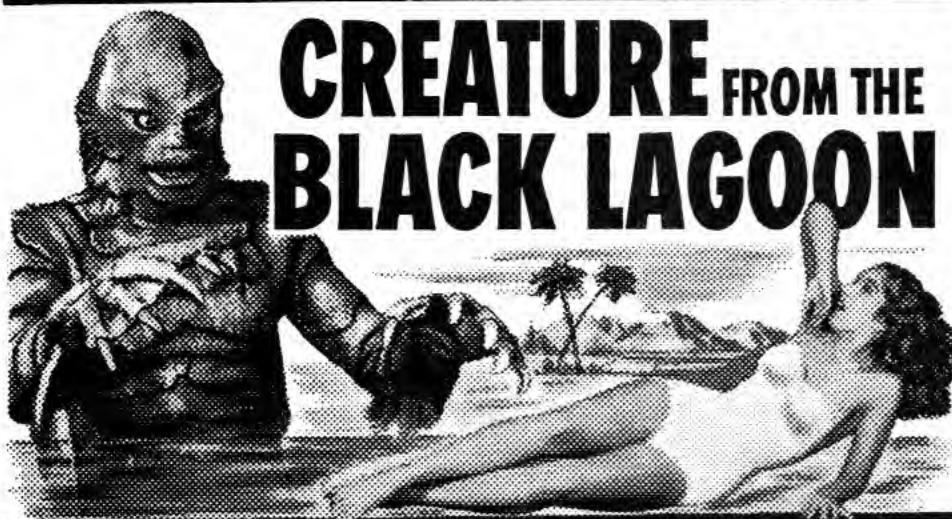
Jack developed an interest in cameras and filming. He came up with a clever way of using this interest to make some extra money by filming various plays around town and then selling the film to the actors who performed in those plays. He bargained on the basic vanity of most actors, and he did not err in his calculations.

Then World War II reared its ugly head. Jack loved airplanes and flying, so he enrolled in the Army Air Corps. Eventually he was accepted, but was told there would be a delay of several months, and that he would need to find some other military niche in the interim. Jack heard about a unit of the Signal Corps which was assigned to making propaganda and training films. But in order to be accepted an applicant had to be able to thread a Mitchell 35mm movie camera. So he rented a Mitchell and spent all day teaching himself to thread and unthread the film until he could do it quickly and expertly.

Jack was accepted by the Signal Corps, where he worked along side his lifelong idol, documen-

(continued)

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tary filmmaker Robert Flaherty (*Nanook of the North*, *Man of Aran*). Imagine his joy when Flaherty sent him out on his own to get some shots of local scenery, and later praised his work.

While in the Army, Jack met Betty, the woman who was to become his wife and companion until the end of his days. He first saw her as Zenita in a college production of *He Who Gets Slapped*, a play which was famous for being the basis of a classic silent movie starring Lon Chaney.

After the war, Jack started the Promotional Film Company with a war buddy, Lee Goodman. Together they made many commercial, industrial, and documentary films, which, before the advent of television, was a sizeable part of the film industry. One of these early films had the dubious title of *Chicken of Tomorrow* (1947)! Their big break came in 1949 when they were hired by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union to make a film about a typical garment worker. The resulting film, *With These Hands* (1950), starred famous

Broadway actor Sam Levene and Arlene Francis and was nominated for an Academy Award. Although it didn't grab the Oscar, Jack was offered a seven year contract with Universal based on its strength. It was an offer which he accepted.

The first film he was assigned was an exploitation thriller called *Girls in the Night*. Although many consider the picture tense and atmospheric, Jack felt that the material was thin and tawdry. But there were vastly more interesting projects waiting for Jack just around the corner.

Motivated by the unexpected success of Arch Oboler's 3-D film *Bwana Devil* (1952), Universal decided to green-light its own 3-D genre picture. Jack was assigned to the project, and he worked very closely with Universal special-effects department head Clifford Stine in perfecting the existing 3-D technology. *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), based (very loosely) on a story by Ray Bradbury, featured a smart, well-paced script, a credible alien, and strong performances. Jack's direction was tight, controlled and imaginative. It was a huge hit, and has gone on to become one of the classics of '50s science-fiction films. For Jack, it was especially meaningful because his first daughter, Susan, was born the same night that the film premiered.

His daughter Susan would go on to become a top casting director for movies for such diverse projects as Joe Dante's *Piranha* (1978) and James L. Brooks' *Terms of Endearment* (1983) and *Taxi*. Now a producer, she scored in 1993 with *Benny and Joon*.

Next Jack made *The Glass Web*, a tense, expert noir starring Edward G. Robinson. Jack's widow Betty once related an amusing incident about Robinson during the making of that picture. Robinson had to go up a staircase, which was built in such a way that he could only be photographed from "his bad side". Robinson was insisting that the entire set be rebuilt to suit his ego when Jack put his foot down and told Robinson "Eddie, you don't have a good side!"—Betty went on to say that Robinson nixed Jack as director for two films after that!

As much of an impact as *It Came From Outer Space* had on science-fiction cinema, Jack's next assignment would top it by defining the archetypal '50s movie monster. When it was decided that *Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954) was to be a 3-D project, Jack was the obvious choice to direct it. Under his helm a potentially lackluster, somewhat familiar monster tale became thrillingly, intrinsically, compulsively watchable. It was an even larger success than *It Came From Outer Space*.



Barry Williams, surfboard in hand, stands behind Jack Arnold on the set of a Brady Bunch special in Hawaii.

Jack next directed the very popular sequel, *Revenge of the Creature* (1955). While not up to the first film it was an exciting and worthy sequel, which features a small Clint Eastwood role. When asked to do a third Creature film, however, Jack bowed out, felling he had exhausted the premise. He recommended his assistant, John Sherwood, who made his directorial debut with the final film of the series, *The Creature Walks Among Us* (1956).

Next, Jack was assigned to direct *The Man From Bitter Ridge* (1955), a western with Lex Barker. It was also his first color film.

Jack's next film was based on his own story idea, and it also has gone on to become another (minor) science-fiction staple of the fifties. *Tarantula!* (1955), with John Agar, featured Leo G. Carroll in a really ugly Quasimodo-like makeup, Clint Eastwood again in a minor role, and big old hairy bug prop.

Red Sundown (1956), a western with Rory Calhoun and Dean Jagger, followed. Then a first-rate crime drama entitled *Outside the Law* (1956), with Ray Danton and Grant Williams. Then came what many consider to be his masterpiece.

The Incredible Shrinking Man, based on Richard Matheson's classic novel "The Shrinking Man" (Matheson also wrote the screenplay) was a thrilling and philosophical classic about a man who mysteriously begins to shrink slowly down to microscopic size. The story was a metaphor for the disillusionment of modern man, finding himself smaller and smaller in cosmic importance. It was brilliantly realized employing an unprecedented use of oversized sets, much more elaborate even than those used 17 years earlier in *Dr. Cyclops* (1940).

Jack fought Matheson over his original nihilistic ending in favor of a more hopeful and philosophical conclusion in which the Shrinking Man does not disappear in nothingness, but rather emerges into an unknown world full, of the awesome wonder of creation. Jack's ending won out, and it's attitude of spiritual optimism was typical of Jack's artistic and personal philosophies.

With the enormous success of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, Jack was moved onto larger, "A" productions. A science-fiction story he had written, *The Monolith Monsters* (1957) was again



passed on to his assistant, John Sherwood. Jack then directed *The Tattered Dress* (1957), a big-budget soap opera. That was followed by a taut modern western, *Man in the Shadow* (1957), with the legendary Orson Welles. Welles-rightly so-refused to work with a police dog when it viciously attacked a grip. Needless to say, the dog was replaced.

Man in the Shadow was followed by another soap, *The Lady Takes a Flyer* (1958), with Lana Turner. About that time Betty gave birth to their second daughter, Kathy.

Jack's contract with Universal expired and he became a free-lance director. He went to MGM to do one of his most offbeat and well-loved projects: *High School Confidential* (1958) starring Russ Tamblyn as a hip, young narcotics cop who works undercover as a high school student to expose an evil marijuana ring. Tamblyn lives with "aunt" Mamie Van Doren, with whom he is very friendly. The cast includes Jerry Lee Lewis and Jackie Coogan as a cold, evil pot dealer. It has gone on to be a cult favorite.

Jack then went to Paramount where he directed a small, sincerely moving sci-fi picture called *The Space Children* (1958). Next to *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, it is probably Jack's most "spiritual" film. The earnest tale of children controlled by alien forces predates *Village of the Damned* (1960), but here the theme is one of hope and redemption and awe of the infinite.

Jack then returned to Universal to direct his most graphic horror melodrama, *Monster on the Campus* (1958). It was the silly and gruesome story of a scientist who accidentally ingests the blood of an extinct fish and is instantly regressed in a savage Neanderthal. Jack didn't care for the garish material, but for monster movie lovers, it can't be beat for bloody good time!

He followed that with a western, *No Name on the Bullet* (1959). Jack was probably feeling that his career was in a lull at about this point. And then he got an offer to go to England to make what was to become his personal favorite film.

Peter Sellers played a triple role in *The Mouse That Roared* (1959), a political satire about how the tiny duchy of Grand Fenwick declares war on the U.S. for the sole purpose of surrendering and collecting millions in relief dollars. The plan backfires, however, when the invading "army" gains control of an experimental bomb and actually does manage to hold the nation at bay. It was an enormous success.

But before the movie hit the theaters, it rated poorly in test screenings. Jack's agent advised him to take a contract CBS was offering him to direct for television. Jack accepted the contract on that

advice, and changed the direction of his career.

Jack Arnold's career became a mirror of his era. In the late fifties and early sixties television came into its own and feature film production slowed down at all studios. He directed episodes of shows as varied as *Rawhide* and *The Mod Squad*. He became known as something of a "doctor" who could be counted on to fix up a troubled series. One such show was *Gilligan's Island*, which went on to become a huge success.

He was made an executive producer of *It Takes a Thief*, and personally directed the episodes in which his friend Fred Astaire appeared.

Jack became disillusioned with CBS when they shelved a personal project of his, a series based on *The Mouse that Roared*. The pilot-with Sid Caesar filling in for Peter Sellers-was again panned by a test audience. After that, Jack decided not to renew his contract with CBS, and his name began to pop up on shows all over the dial.

While Jack made most of his money in television after 1960, his feature work did not end. He made *Bachelor in Paradise* (1961) and *A Global Affair* (1964) with Bob Hope, who insisted on working from cue cards-much to Jack's consternation. *The Lively Set* (1964), with James Darren, followed. Then a lightweight Tony Randall vehicle for Ivan Tors, *Hello Down There* (1969). In 1974 at the height of the cycle of black action pictures, he directed Fred Williamson in his independent production *Black Eye*. Jack and Williamson had many creative differences, but Williamson respected Jack's professionalism and know-how enough to hire him again later for *Boss Nigger* (1975).

Jack then became very ill, forcing him to work less and less. His career low-point came when he was misled about the nature of a project and became contractually obligated to direct a soft-core British farce, *The Bunny Caper* (1974)-Jack's last theatrical feature was *The Swiss Conspiracy* (1976), a mild action thriller film in Switzerland. He became very ill and was sent home before the movie was edited. He was very unhappy with the way it was cut in his absence.

In 1980 he was brought in as the third director on a troubled television bio-pic called *Marilyn: The Untold Story*. Jack was able to do what two younger directors had failed to do before him. He finished the picture.

In later part of his career, Jack tried desperately to get many of his own projects off the ground. Chief among those were remakes of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* and *Creature From the Black Lagoon* to be co-produced by John Landis. These projects were both, at various times, were very close to being given the green light by Uni-

versal. Many of Jack's intricate story boards still exist. Either project could have been a triumphant swan song for one of the genre's most civilized champions. Alas, it was not to be.

Jack Arnold died on March 17, 1992, after many long years of various complicated illnesses. He shall be missed by three generations of fans who grew up on his movies. For me, he will always be a man who gave the science-fiction film a human soul. ■

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Asian Invasion: Jackie Chan



Jackie Chan always does all of his own stunts, this time in his latest American release, *Rumble in the Bronx*.

Interview by Tim Kietel

I first encountered Jackie Chan on the big screen in the early '80s when he made his American film debut in *Cannonball Run*. Since then I hadn't heard much about Chan on the American front. His stature in the United States after such American films as *Cannonball Run*'s sequel, *The Big Brawl* and *The Protector* had left Chan in a sort of purgatorial state. After his brief stint in Hollywood, Chan returned to Hong Kong and took control of his acting and filmmaking career. The martial arts/comedic actor became a huge star in Asia. His public appearances in Asia have resulted in numerous riots to say the least.

Chan does his own stunts and has the scars to prove it. Most noticeable is his pug-like nose, which he has broken three times. Other injuries include broken limbs - one compliments of his recent endeavor *Rumble in the Bronx* - and a head injury that he received during a stunt that required a simple leap onto a tree branch. Accidentally, Chan turned to the camera during the jump and missed the branch. The result was a forty foot fall, brain surgery and one hell of a headache that has left him with a hole in his noggin to this day.

Still Chan is the first to admit that this is all part

of the job, and he loves every bit of it. "In Hong Kong, when you hurt yourself, you can't take off two or three months to recover because the industry will forget about you," notes Chan. Although, I find it hard to believe that anyone would forget about Chan, which the actor humbly agrees, he is quick to note that he still follows the same work ethic that he had before he became a big star. In every Jackie Chan movie, Chan will always perform all of his stunts.

Still where many of Chan's fans recognized his talents, many mainstream filmgoers failed to catch on. That was until a certain filmmaker that many of us identified with, Quentin Tarantino, started paying homage to Chan. Tarantino summed it up when he presented Jackie Chan with 1995's MTV Lifetime Achievement Award: "It's one of the achievements of my lifetime to honor one of my heroes of all time.... When you watch a Jackie Chan movie, you want to be Jackie Chan.... He is one of the best filmmakers the world has ever known. He is one of the greatest physical comedians since sound came into films.... If I could be any actor, I would have the life Jackie Chan has," Tarantino said.

According to a recent *Time Magazine* article, "Jackie Chan is the last good guy, and arguably, the world's best-loved movie star. In American terms, he's a little Clint Eastwood (actor-director), a dash of Gene Kelly (imaginative choreographer), a bit of Jim Carrey (rubbery ham) and lot of silent movie clowns: Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd."

And Chan's mystique is catching on faster and faster every day. On a recent trek to a local theater, Chan's trailer for *Rumble In The Bronx* gained considerable screams and applause from the audience, and the movie wasn't even out yet.

Rumble In The Bronx is Chan's first venture into the American market in 10 years. In the film, Chan plays a Hong Kong tourist who comes to New York City to attend his uncle's wedding. His plans include a little relaxation, sight-seeing and helping out around the family grocery store, but somebody forgets to tell him that the market is located in the middle of the South Bronx. Chan finds himself caught up in a crime war, battling a ruthless motorcycle gang and a crime syndicate. Chan teaches the locals not to mess with a seemingly average Joe, who just happens to be a world-class

daredevil and martial arts master. Although the script is weak, Chan exhibits the comedic and martial arts skills that can win over any avid movie goer. Chan choreographs and participates in fight sequences that parallel a great night at the Bolshoi Ballet.

As for his stunts, they are breathtaking to say the least. In this film, Chan teams up with former stuntman turned director Stanley Tong to create one stunt after another that will leave you spellbound. The most chilling stunt requiring Chan to leap from a rooftop to a balcony that is 40 feet below and 26 feet away on an adjoining building. *Rumble in the Bronx* wins you over and leaves you exhausted after the film ends.

I recently caught up with Chan at the Hotel Nikko in West Hollywood. Chan, who is on a gruelling cross country promotional tour to promote *Rumble In The Bronx*, took some time out to talk with *Cult Movies*.

Cult Movies: How are you feeling?

Jackie Chan: Not too comfortable because I have been interviewing all morning and will be going straight through tonight. I need to get out and jog and train a bit. I'm just not used to sitting down and interviewing for 10 hours. One day I did 63 interviews. I didn't even have enough time to take a pee. I'm not used to this at all. In Asia, a Jackie Chan film doesn't need any promotion. It does well on its own. I don't like doing promotion.

CM: Welcome to the United States.

JC: Thank you. The Asian people like my work, and I want to share that with the American audience. If they don't like it, and turn away from me that will hurt. But my attitude towards America has changed. Fifteen years ago I wanted to be a big star here, but now it is totally different. Before, I failed here, but now I just want to show the audience what I have been doing these past 15 years.

CM: Do you think your failure here in the early '80s was based on anything particular?

JC: I am much more interesting now than I was then. You have to remember that before I was more of a student than what I am today. My English has improved a lot. I have learned a lot



from people about why my first venture here didn't work the first time around... Fifteen years ago I was doing the same kicking, punching, jumping and comedy that I'm doing now. And I keep asking people why they like me now, and all they can say is 15 years ago they were only five years old.

CM: After watching *Rumble In The Bronx*, I was exhausted. Do you usually take a vacation after completing a film of this magnitude.

JC: No. I go on to another movie right away. I don't even know how many movies I have even been in. I can't waste time. I'm not young anymore (Chan is pushing 43). I can't go on forever doing this action, fighting, adventure stuff. As a result, I have learned to delegate more. Before, I was doing the directing, casting, set design and location scouting. Now, I have learned to leave that to the director and let him deal with all of that. When I get done with a film, I'm ready to move on with Stanley (Stanley Tong) to the next project.

CM: During the filming of *Rumble In The Bronx* you broke your leg. How did you recover so fast

from that?

JC: I live for pain. Even when I was young, I loved pain. If I get hurt, I have to keep going because even though I'm a star and I could take a break to recover, the whole production would end up shutting down, and I just can't have that happen. The producers would lose money, and besides the crew is counting on me to get paid.

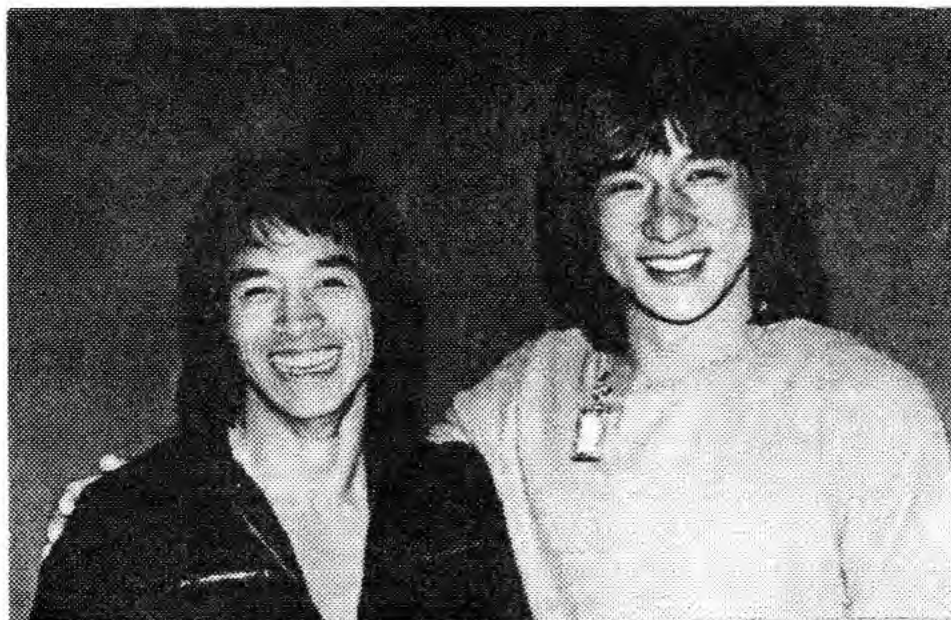
CM: Are you fearful that you will be censored once Hong Kong reverts back to the Chinese government in 1997?

JC: No. My films don't have anything to do with politics. A Jackie Chan film is a happy go lucky experience. Although there is a lot of fighting in my films... even when someone gets killed, you don't see it. There's never any love scenes or sex. I always like to make the world look prettier. Even in *Rumble*, I tried to make the Bronx look prettier and colorful. Even when we were casting, they were trying to cast an all black gang because we were in the Bronx. I said no. Gangs cross all racial lines, and I wanted the gang in this film to reflect that. And, that is my way.

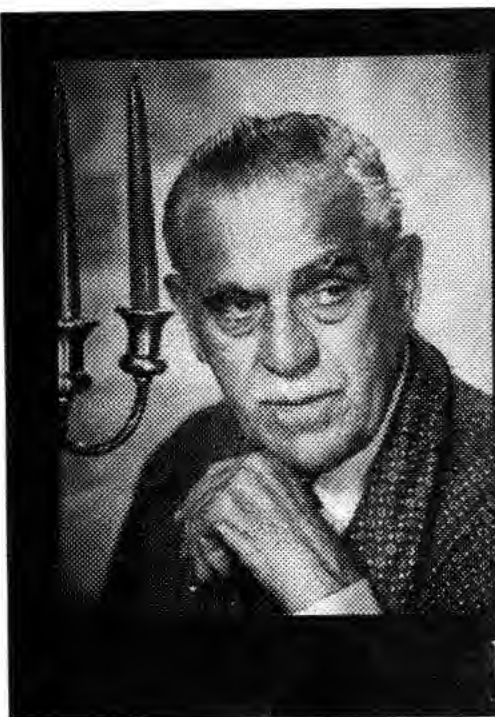
CM: Do you think you can adapt yourself to working with American filmmakers?

JC: The question should be, can they adapt themselves to working with me? Our styles are so different that it has proven to be quite difficult. When I was making *The Protector* with Danny Aiello, the director was trying to explain to me how to throw a punch. I've been fighting for 30 years, and this guy is trying to teach me how to throw a fucking punch. Further, many American filmmakers aren't used to making martial arts films the Hong Kong way. When I work with Stanley Tong, he knows how far he can push me and how far I can go. He knows the camera movements for martial arts films and is able to keep up to me.

After this question, Chan is whisked out of the room and led down the hall to his next interview. On route, I notice Chan manages to slip into the men's restroom, probably to take that long awaited "pee" that has eluded the star during his grueling schedule. *Rumble In The Bronx* opened in the Spring of 1996 and was the #1 movie its opening weekend. Chan soon found his name synonymous with Stallone and Schwarzenegger in the U.S. ■



A young Jackie Chan (right) before he conquered America.



When Karloff Was King



by Michael Copner

In the 1960s Boris Karloff was truly the king of horror filmland. Of course Karloff was king of the roost at Universal in 1935, but that wasn't quite the same thing. Even though his greatest films were made in the 1930s and '40s, and his richest stage work was probably in the 1940s and '50s, it wasn't until the 1960s that it would all converge and explode on a new generation of young film fans, all eager to dwell in the horrible, wonderful Kingdom of Karloff.

By the time of the American Monster Craze of the sixties, all of Karloff's masterpieces had the weight and prestige of classic status. *Body Snatchers* and *Frankenstein* might be black and white, that's true, but when we saw them on television, everything was black and white. Whether you saw Boris on his fantastic TV show *Thriller*, or in his fantastic film *The Black Cat*, you were going to see him in black and white, and this tended to enforce the perception of a vast, wealthy wondrous body of work evolving before our eyes all of a piece. A thirty year career became an immediate, contemporary event, unified for us with Karloff's new work, unified for us in a way that seem impossible since the technological alteration of color TV has become such a radical dividing line. The fact that new color AIP films like *The Terror* and *Black Sabbath* were playing at theatres helped confirm that impression, but wasn't the end-all.

More to the point was the assessment of it all as rendered by *Famous Monsters Magazine*, such as in their "Meal With a Monster" article, their awesome Filmbook on *Bride Of Frankenstein*, or in Forrest J. Ackerman's oft-repeated homage, "O king, live forever!" That magazine confirmed our impression that the entire output of an actor's life was a present-time event. This experience would be impossible to a 1990s generation of kids, some of whom cannot even comprehend a film or TV show if seen in black and white or recognize a continuity, a progressive development over a 30 year output of film. We were blessed to be young in those magical sixties, and to have a King who could never retire, but wished to die with his boots



on and greasepaint on his face.

When we loved him in the '60s of course it was because of his artistry in those pioneering horror films. If Karloff was extra special on television it was because he'd become the saintly, sinister old Grandfather of Terror. His prior reputation allowed him to emerge as the ultimate master of mystery and suspense in a way that Rod Serling and Alfred Hitchcock could never quite approach. Of course not; they'd never been *Frankenstein!* When Boris came out and said, "I guarantee it's a Thriller," you knew there could be no finer guarantee on earth!

Recently I was honored to meet Sara Karloff, daughter of Boris, and was delighted to learn that The Sixties was also her favorite period of her father's career. I joined our publisher Buddy Barnett to meet with Sara at the newly refurbished Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood for an informal interview. There is a motion picture exhibit at the Roosevelt which includes several pictures of Boris Karloff. Since Sara had never seen this display, we took the tour and snapped a few pictures of the occasion for our readers. Then we retreated to the main lobby for our interview. Here is how it went.

Cult Movies: I've just reread Cynthia Lindsay's

book, *Dear Boris*. In that book there was a mention of a time when Boris invited you to visit him during a play and it seemed that he might have wanted to encourage you toward an acting career.

Sara Karloff: The play was *Peter Pan*. I was supposed to see it on Broadway, but as things worked out I had to wait and see it in Chicago. He arranged for me to watch it from the wings and out front and back stage and every possible point of view. I was there for several days and at the end he said, "Well, I can see you have no fire in the belly for the theater!" He never wanted me to pursue a career in acting. He felt very strongly that unless it was the only passion in your life, and the only thing you wanted to do at the exclusion of everything else, it was a dreadful way to spend one's life because the disappointments were so great, the breaks so few, the work so hard and the chances of success so slim. In his case acting was his great passion and there was no other work that could have brought him such pleasure, so it was the only thing for him to do. He would have done that and nothing else, but he would never encourage anyone else to enter that profession unless they were determined to do that and nothing else with their life.

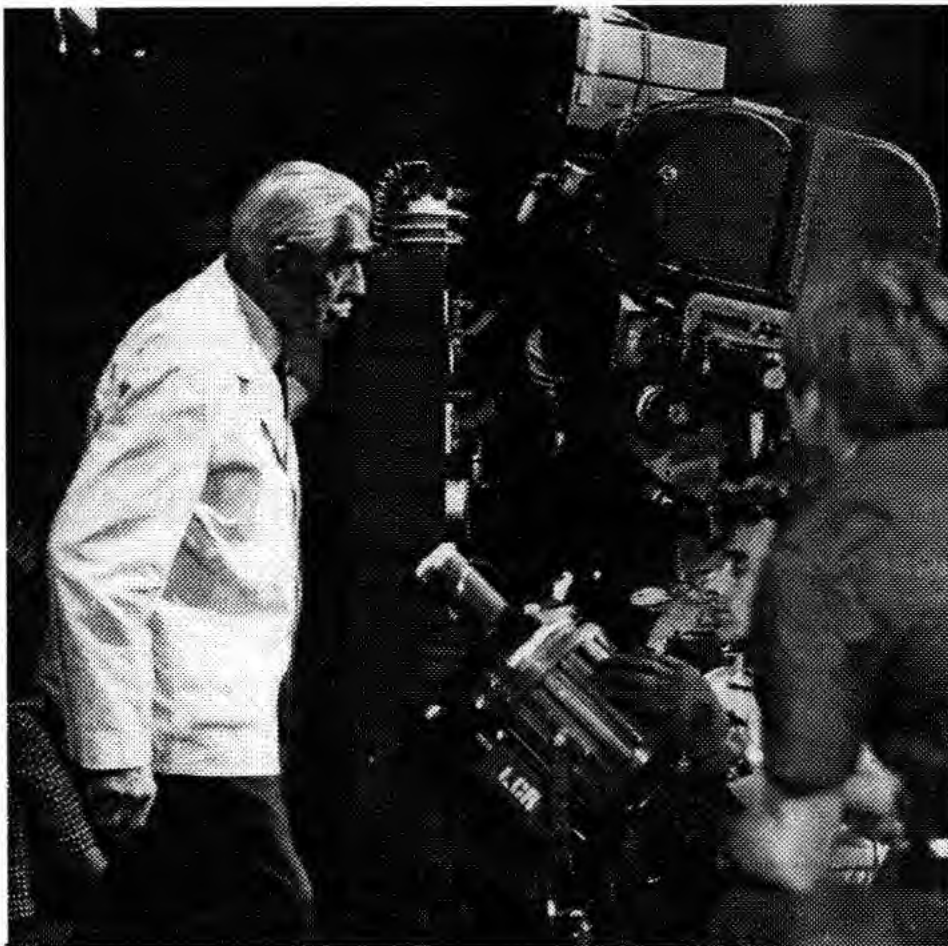
CM: Did Boris ever talk much about those tough first 20 years of his career?

SK: People often ask me that and the answer is no. And in trying to arrive at why that might have been the case I think there are several reasons. One is that he was a very private man; he did not talk about his career simply to be center stage in a conversation. Being British and very private, he did not invite a lot of questions about his personal life. I think that his early years were very rough — lots of disappointment, lots of hard work — and I think there was a part of him that felt if he were to discuss those early years it might be perceived as grousing; and he was never one to complain about anything. No matter how demanding the roles, or how arduous and long the hours might be, he never groused about anything.

His poor health during the last 10 years of his life never prevented him from working, never caused him to complain on the set. So for him to talk about his early years in England which were not... (pauses)... well, I don't think he had a par-



Cult Movies publisher Buddy Barnett and Sara Karloff at a recent get-together at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.



"When those last four films were shot in Mexico, his emphysema didn't allow him to go into that climate, so they arranged to work around that and shoot his scenes in Hollywood; and he said he was amazed that they'd be willing to do that to have him in these films." — Sara Karloff.

particularly warm childhood. And he would have thought of discussing those years as complaining. I have seen and heard some interviews that Boris gave in the 1960s on the air and for press agents when he was getting ready to do three television shows, and there he does talk about his early life, but only in generalities. He might mention a touring with a road company or some particular performance but it's not really much of a window on his life.

CM: He seemed like a real sharp businessman. Did he surround himself with investment counselors or partners in any enterprises you know of?

SK: No. He had somebody who handled his investments, but my stepmother was the one who probably guided the business end of things and was very supportive of his career, made it possible for him to continue working even when he was in ill health because he wanted to continue working. It was their mutual respect and affection for each other that led to a life-partnership, but he didn't surround himself with attorneys and businessmen. She was very possessive of his time and privacy, and he really felt that before she came into his life, the rest of his life was unimportant. She was really the only partner or advisor.

CM: Did Boris ever talk about how he went about preparing a role for a film or play?

SK: No. The only thing I remember him saying along that line was that he believed there was never a time in his life — nor did he believe that there was ever a time in any actors life — when a

few seconds before going on stage in the legitimate theatre, the actor didn't experience stage fright.

CM: Boris got stage fright?

SK: For the first few seconds before stepping onto the stage. And he said, "I don't think there's an actor alive who, if he'd tell you the truth wouldn't tell you the same thing."

CM: Once you're out there, though...

SK: Once you're on the stage, you say your first few lines, and if you're professionally prepared, you're into it and the fright vanishes. But those first few seconds...

CM: I like to compare styles of my other favorites. I recall Jackie Gleason saying, "I don't understand these method actors who have to get in the mood. You get the script two months before you do the play or film. When the time comes, you go out and do your part and it's easy." On the other hand, another favorite here at *Cult Movies* is Lugosi, who really felt the need to psych himself up before his big stage performances. During *Dracula* he told people no one could talk to him while the play was in progress because he was deeply into that other character. Looking back now, I wonder which camp or heading Boris Karloff would have come under in his major work?

SK: Oh, I think he would have been in the Jackie Gleason camp. He'd have said, "I'm a professional with a job to do, I'm prepared to do it and I'm going to go out there and give it one hundred percent." But he would not have been a method actor.

CM: You've mentioned that you didn't see some of your father's films because they've always frightened you.

SK: I'm still impressionable — I leave the room during *Murder She Wrote*. I have a discomfort with gory, frightening, or violent films, and it has nothing to do with whether or not they were my father's films. Many of his signature roles were created before I was born. Then by the time they were re-released my parents were divorced and both remarried; I was living up in San Francisco with my mother and I was very busy with school. It wasn't as though we were going to rush out and see these older films just because my father was in them. Similarly with television, most of the horror films didn't come to television right away. I began watching them when they did, but a lot of them were broadcast at midnight or later and I didn't stay up that late. So it wasn't until the advent of home video that I began seeing many of them. I've accumulated quite a collection of them — and as long as the lights are all on, or it's broad daylight, and someone is sitting there holding my hand, I'll watch them. In many ways I'm seeing them and thoroughly enjoying them for the first time from a whole new perspective. It's a contrast to his stage and television work.

I saw him on stage in *The Lark*, *Peter Pan*, *On Borrowed Time* — never did I see him do *Arsenic and Old Lace*, unfortunately. And I probably saw about 50 percent of his live television work, and enjoyed the variety in the characters he was playing. I think his television work far outshone his film work in the 1950s and '60s. He had a good agent in Arthur Kenner, and I think he helped get him into live television at the very outset and my father enjoyed it and was very grateful for yet another dimension to his career.

CM: That's why I asked earlier if he had a team
(continued)





Karloff's poor health during the last 10 years of his life never prevented him from working and, according to his daughter, never caused him to complain on the set.

of business agents or advisors. Not every actor jumped into television as quickly as Boris did.

SK: Well, yes, the numbers of people one could reach via television were astronomical compared to the run of a play or even a film. He knew these things because he was a very intelligent, aware and well-read man, but he was never driven by the mere pursuit of money, ever. He was very conservative in his life-style, living comfortably but very quietly. And he was very grateful to still be working right up to the very end. When those last four films were shot in Mexico, his emphysema didn't allow him to go into that climate, so they arranged to work around that and shoot his scenes in Hollywood; and he said he was amazed that they'd be willing to do that to have him in these films. I'm not entirely sure that he understood why he was still in demand — although he certainly realized that he *was* in demand. And I think he felt that he'd worked very hard for it. He knew he had fans around the world, and felt he should continue working as long as they wanted him.

One of the reasons I've enjoyed appearing at film conventions these past several years is that it

provides a conduit for people who wish they could have told my father a story or shared an experience or anecdote, but were never able to tell him; they at least are pleased to be able to tell it to me. But I realize that the whole association has nothing to do with me.

CM: I hope that doesn't make you feel badly...

SK: Certainly not, this shouldn't have anything to do with me; I have no ego in this whatsoever. My father left a remarkable legacy. To the best of my knowledge there has never been said or printed a bad or unkind thing about him. He was an amazingly good human being, well thought of professionally, loved personally and by his fans. The passion I have is to see that his name and likeness should be perpetuated in a tasteful manner. Although I would not personally be a fan of the horror genre, I am very respectful of those fans, as was my father; for without the fans there is no perpetuation of a career, and later no perpetuation of a memory. So the fans are what it's all about, and all I can do is learn from them. I'm convinced they know more about my father's career than I ever will. When they ask me to speak

at conventions, I don't go with a planned speech; the people want to ask questions and I try to answer them as well as I can. I'm comfortable doing that since I know that if I don't have certain facts about Boris Karloff handy, someone in that audience will know. That's why I enjoy doing the conventions. It's the only way I know to perpetuate my father's gratitude to his fans.

CM: This may be an awkward way to phrase it, but it seems as though in the families of Karloff, Lugosi, and Chaney — the offsprings are much closer than the parents ever were.

SK: Of course we are. As you probably know we all met in 1993 at the Famous Monsters Convention in Virginia. We each were invited separately, along with Dwight Frye Jr. None of us had met before, each was curious about what the other guy was like and so we attended. And we were very pleasant surprises to one another! We liked one another, we found that we were real people, that we had real lives outside of this one small part of our lives...

CM: The movie monsters?

SK: Yes — a very big part, but also a very small part. We now work together, play together, confirm, agree, disagree. We do a lot of things independent of one another, but we're protective of one another. If one of us sees an infringement, we'll tell the other one. We look out for one another, but the bottom line is that we truly do like one another. If our fathers, or in Ron Chaney's case his grandfather, never did socialize together there were reasons for that. Lon Chaney Jr. was of a younger generation. And in the other two cases — Bela Lugosi was very Hungarian and my father was very British. It's not surprising they didn't sit down for tea and goulash together. They worked together, they didn't play together. It made good news copy to perpetuate the story that there was some personal rivalry between Karloff and Lugosi, but I really don't think it was true. The only thing I ever heard my father say about Bela was that it was a shame he hadn't mastered the English language better.

CM: At least there's no rivalry between the kids. You're all working on new media projects and the marketing of respectable products — no toy Frankenstein monsters with their pants falling down! Everything you've created has a touch of class to it — and I'll bet the fans enjoy getting the items direct from the family as a source.

SK: I think they do. The volume of mail we get is astronomical. In case you're interested, I'd have to say that at this time, Lon, Boris, and Bela are all equally popular. ■

If you wish to contact Sara Karloff, she can be reached via; Karloff Enterprises, PO Box 2424, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270 The new Karloff products are regularly listed in Cult Movies.



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Family Values:

An Appreciation of *Die, Monster, Die*

by Brad Unaweaver

Remember how there used to be only three Lovecraft films, all courtesy of AIP and natural fare for the local drive-in? Roger Corman transformed *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* into *The Haunted Palace* and included it in his Poe series. His art director, Daniel Haller, must have been haunted by the experience because he went on to direct his own *Necronomicon*-inspired movies. Lovecraft's "The Colour Out of Space" became *Die, Monster, Die* and "The Dunwich Horror" became *The Dunwich Horror*.

For a number of years, it seemed like there would be no more films based on the work of Howard Phillips Lovecraft. We had to settle for some fairly decent attempts on Serling's *Night Gallery*. Hard to believe that fans used to criticize the lack of purity of the part of those films and TV show. Today, we have a flood of movies with H.P. Lovecraft's name in the title. And I find myself thinking there haven't been any Lovecraft movies since AIP's trilogy.

In the future, we will look back on the Herbert West film and its progeny, and wonder if anyone will ever do Lovecraft films with that level of integrity again. Someone will say, "Remember the days when producers at least used Lovecraft's titles? Ah, those were the days." Then it's on to a review of HPL's *The Dominatrix Out of Time*.

I've seen 'em all and I still think *The Haunted Palace* is the best HPL on film. Vincent Price in a great dual role, Lon Chaney, Jr., in a decent part

late in his career, Debra Paget never more beautiful and the perfect choice to be sacrificed to a horny monster in a pit... this movie had it all. Corman put together a great veteran cast, got himself a script capturing the paranoid mood of the Lovecraft universe, and turned on the fog machines.

Haller had a good idea to do a series of HPL films that would vie with Corman's Poe series. Too bad it didn't work. But the two films he made are certainly worth seeing. Having participated in a radio/audio adaptation of "The Dunwich Horror," I'm prejudiced in favor of a more faithful adaptation than the film version. But, hey, it's much easier to be faithful in the talky medium. Haller's *The Dunwich Horror* has its moments, along with whole chunks of HPL's story. When I'm in the right mood, I thoroughly enjoy Dean Stockwell's performance as Wilbur Whateley. I remember *Castle of Frankenstein* said he played it like he was stoned out of his mind. Casting closer to HPL's story would have been Richard Kiel in monster makeup. But what would that have done to the scenes with Sandra Dee? Other assets are Ed Begley, Sam Jaffe, an unforgettable credits sequence and one of the few Les Baxter scores that's up to the standards of Ronald Stein.

I just noticed the title of this piece. Seems like I better get to *Die, Monster, Die*. It was a big deal in 1965. *Castle of Frankenstein* trumpeted this as Karloff's first dramatic monster role since 1939. This was also the first movie to make a bit deal out of its Lovecraftian origin. (*Haunted Palace* was, after all, officially part of the Poe series.)

At the time, it seemed pretty good. I don't recall when it fell into disrepute. The first TV movie book I ever bought gave it high marks. Today's TV movie books are lukewarm at best. What happened?

Writing for *Cult Movies* inspired fundamental research: namely, slapping a video tape into the machine and watching old favorites. I write this right after seeing *Die, Monster, Die*, and it's a lot better than critics admit. First of all, Boris Karloff is excellent. It has been pointed out in the pages of *CM* and elsewhere that Karloff didn't always give 100% on projects that were less than top drawer. Well, he pulls out all the stops here for a movie that is not exactly perfect. Another plus is that *DMD* gives us plenty of Karloff. We're not talking cameo here.

All the character parts are fine. Nobody plays a surly village doctor better than Patrick Magee. (Remember *Dementia 13*?) Freda Jackson is Karloff's equal. Nick Adams is a lot better than I remembered. You don't judge an actor by how many clichés he's expected to rattle off but the way he acquires himself. Adams is more convincing than a lot of the bland heroes from horror films of the period. He conveys anger and frustration, forcing us to believe in the reality of his character.

The only bad performance in the whole film is Suzan Farmer. Part of the blame is that her character is badly written.

Which brings us to the script. *DMD* has an inferior script to its ancestor (*Haunted Palace*) and its descendant (*Dunwich Horror*). The question is: how inferior? *DMD* seem to be the *House of Usher* script redone to incorporate Lovecraft touches. To be fair, the original story would make a superb half-hour *Twilight Zone* adaptation. A lot more plot is required for a movie.

So what that they moved Arkham from New England to England to accommodate Boris that year? So what that the plot seems overly familiar? The little details are what actually matter in horror films. In this department, *DMD* show a sincerity closer to the spirit of Lovecraft than the current crop of sexed-up gross out parodies.

Haller was a better director by the time he got to





Nick Adams comforts a shaken Suzan Farmer as Boris Karloff looks on in *Die, Monster, Die*.

The Dunwich Horror. The weakest moments in *DMD* are taken straight from earlier Corman films—the skeleton, the spider, the bat, the thunderstorm. He doesn't seem to realize that the monsters are more than sufficient to carry the show. Poe is dealing with death. Lovecraft is dealing with mutations and biological decay. In the Cthulhu Mythos, death is a blessing. One of the best moments in *DMD* is Adams discovering the ululating menagerie in the greenhouse. Another bit worthy of Lovecraft is when Adams follows the luminescent handprints, the glowing trail, left by the monster Karloff has become.

My choice for most embarrassing directorial misstep is when Haller tries for a Hitchcockian effect and botches it. He matches the footsteps of Adams and Farmer with the ticking of a clock, and then speed up the sequence. Nice idea. Bad execution.

But most of the directing is OK, especially Karloff's entrances. In fact, Haller's instincts are on-target in all the Karloff scenes, whether we see the elder Witley fingering chains in his dungeon, or trying to destroy the glowing meteorite with an axe, or digging a grave for what remains of his faithful servant. *DMD* doesn't cheat. You get plenty of Karloff and plenty of monsters.

DMD even follows the pattern of Lovecraft's own horror stories. They started out supernatural/fantasy and ended up science fiction. Karloff plays a man who disbelieves in his father's superstitions and looks for a rational explanation for the fantastic things that are happening to his family.

What I like best about *DMD* is what I don't find in today's horror movies: the conservative attitude. The core of Lovecraft's fiction is a traditionalist's lament at how the modern world crushes the things he loves. When this idea is extended, you arrive at cosmic fear. When the modern, scientific mind finds out that everything it knows is wrong, the situation is every bit as

annoying as what the traditionalist has faced this entire century.

Karloff is the patriarch in *DMD*, trying to hold on to family values in a world that changes every time he turns around. Instant mutation is even more unsettling than a new generation challenging the Establishment. Holding a family together is hard work at the best of times. When your wife starts turning into a monster right before your eyes, it takes a guy with conservative values to

stick with her. She may be a monster, but it's all in the family.

DMD makes you see the situation from Karloff's point of view. When a handsome young man shows up at your doorstep to take away your beautiful young daughter, that's a pain in the ass. You won't be able to look at the girl any longer! You'll be left with the decaying countenance of your monster wife. Poor guy.

So Daddy becomes a monster and chases daughter. Who needs Lovecraft to explain this? Dr. Freud will do just fine, thank you. Traditional monster movies understand family life much better than any other genre. Modern horror movies haven't got a clue. They barely understand dating.

If I'm right about family values, this may explain why young kids love *The Addams Family* so much. We may have reached a point in Western Civilization where only monsters can hold families together. If there's a crawling thing in the family, you lock it in the closet instead of calling in a social worker.

The bottom line is this: H.P. Lovecraft would sympathize with the eccentric patriarch essayed by Boris Karloff in *Die, Monster, Die*. Regarding the more recent Lovecraft films, he'd just as likely feed the entire cast to the monsters. He preferred the Old Ones to a far greater horror—the Young Ones!

(Readers interested in acquiring the audio adaptation of "The Dunwich Horror" in which Brad is one of the actors, can order a special 90-minute tape including an adaptation of HPL's "Pickman's Model" from: The Atlanta Radio Theatre Company/ P.O. Box 1675/ Duluth, GA 30136-1880. The price is \$12.00—(\$10 for the show and \$2 for postage and handling.) Ask for the catalog which lists a number of other Lovecraft shows, including "The Rats in the Walls" starring Harlan Ellison. There's also "The Competitor" by someone named Brad Linaweaver.) ■



Karloff the patriarch tries hard to hold on to his daughter in *Die, Monster, Die*.

by Michael Ferguson

"It's not to say that it was going to happen, but there was a possibility. The reason they were looking at Al Pacino and the reason they were looking at me was because of two movies. Al Pacino because he had done this movie called *Panic in Needle Park* and me because I had done this movie called *Trash*—two drug movies. They were far, far apart, but they were interesting as portrayals, and why these two characters I don't know, but these were the performances they were looking at it. And for my people to put me down that way was really upsetting."

Joe Dallesandro is talking to me about a time in the early seventies when Hollywood knocked on his Factory door.

The gorgeous star of three increasingly visible underground movie hits, he could no longer go unnoticed by the big boys out west. What they would have done with him is anyone's guess, but at the very least Francis Ford Coppola was interested in Joe for a screen test on *The Godfather*. His dark Italian good looks and urban edge particularly suited him to the material; whether he could play a dramatic role under studio conditions was what needed to be determined. But at the height of his career, he never really even got a chance to test the waters.

When I ask Paul Morrissey whether there's any truth to the rumors that both he and Warhol were determined to keep their hands on their star—that Dallesandro may have been considered Factory property—and that subsequently he and Andy told the Hollywood suitors that Joe wasn't really an actor, that he couldn't handle a script, and maybe even that he had some drug problems, the director tells me (with annoyance at the notion underscoring his voice) that the scenario I've provided is "garbage." Both he and Andy, he adds, would have been thrilled had Joe been able to get a role in a major motion picture.

Joe sees it differently.

"Paul's idea of the movie I should do was a movie called *The Gardener*," he says, getting wound up a little. "I should do this movie because, one, 'Joe, your first Hollywood movie should be a movie that preferably doesn't get released.' Two, 'you just want to do it so you can get a chance to work with a Hollywood group and preferably it's a movie that gets shelved so that you get the experience of having worked it but nobody can see that it's a bad movie.'"

"I couldn't understand that and I said, 'Paul, I'm not agreeing with you on this. I don't see why I can't do a good movie. I don't think I'd fail at it.' He says, 'Trust me, trust me,' and I did that. He gave me the go-ahead because he thought it would never be released, that it was such a piece of shit that nobody would ever see this."

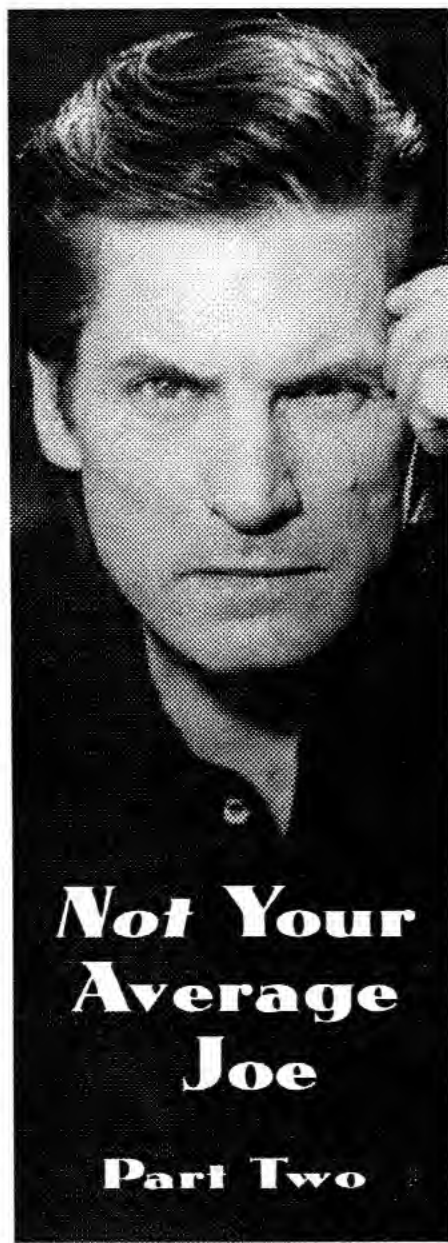
Joe's movie image had been cultivated by Morrissey to the point where he was cold and nearly always silent. This career trek towards emotional ennui found ultimate displacement in his first diversion from the Warhol film factory playing a half-naked gardener who tends to killer plants in the cheesy horror flick also known as *Seeds of Evil* (1974).

Deeply tanned, with his hair now hanging down in back to his butt, Joe appears to be toying with method-acting here. Given the role of a man at one with vegetation, he is at his most hilariously deadpan and monotone as Carl, a performance so wooden that it can only be seen as foreshadowing his character's eventual transformation into a tree.

Shot in Puerto Rico, this drive-in movie silliness stars Katherine Houghton (Tracy and Hepburn's annoying daughter in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*) and Rita Gam ('50s actress and ex-wife of Sidney Lumet) as two snobby babblers with the hots for hunky Joe.

"On the releasing of it in the South," Dallesandro recalls, "they sent a rose to people in the neighborhood as a flower from *The Gardener*. They didn't spend a lot of money on the thing, it was kind of low-budget, but much more than we ever spent on a movie."

Back in New York, Italian investors wanted Paul Morrissey to make a couple of films in Italy, but insisted



that Joe Dallesandro star in them. Joe was damned reluctant to go, particularly since he was promised in the deal even before he was asked, but ended up making the trip to Europe to film what would become known as *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein* and *Andy Warhol's Dracula* (1974), the Factory's first 35mm films, back to back.

International casts and crews were assembled and no one knew much English, all the more reason for Morrissey to work with a semblance of a script this time, though originally he wanted the films to be improvised. Each day the actors would be given the lines he and Pat Hackett had written the night before for the following day's shoot.

Tensions ran high, particularly between Joe and Morrissey, firstly over Joe's insistence that he too be provided scripted lines and then over money matters. Though given lead billing on both films, this would be the first time under Morrissey's directorship that Joe was to play only supporting roles.

Frankenstein, once described by its director as the search for the perfect nose, was shot in 3-D and featured Joe, now shorn of the glorious mane he'd been growing for five years, as a horny field hand whose asexual best friend loses his head in a case of mistaken identity.

Baron Frankenstein (Udo Kier) thinks the head he's just sheared off belongs to a man of great sexual prowess and he needs such a man to top off his male zombie so that

it can mate with the female. He doesn't count on Joe to subsequently show up as an employee of the mansion and recognize the stitched-on head of the castle's new guest.

Joe's darkly handsome features and laconic sexual buzz are perfect for the role, though he continues his trend toward seriously underplaying his part and one is never quite sure if it's deliberate or merely a reflection of his unhappiness at the time. He is entirely out of period synch with his surroundings, yet strangely, it is his comically anachronistic accent and apparent apathy towards being onscreen that fuels his appeal in this campy, very funny gore show.

Joe comes off like the most vapid of stilted movie heroes—a David Manners from Queens—and achieves some level of brilliance when reciting dead dialogue (about having to get into the Baron's lab) while the Baron's nympho sister (Monique Van Vooren) loudly sucks and laps away at his armpit during an erotic tryst.

DRACULA may be slightly less funny than its predecessor, and was shot without the cumbersome 3-D, but it gives Joe an even juicier opportunity to wrap his thick Brooklyn-accent around dialogue delivered in Central Europe. Here he's the Marxist handyman who gets to scowl interminably and deliver an enjoyably vitriolic speech against the class system and about social revolution while bedding two daughters of an aristocratic family teetering on ruin.

When I tell him how impressed I am with the makeup job done to hide his tattoo in one scene, Joe explains "They reversed the film. You're seeing the opposite arm."

Joe verily spits his dialogue here, mocking the girls' dreams of fortune and position as they fantasize about wedding Count Dracula (Udo Kier, again). Later on, the sexist brute has no choice but to deflower the last of the family virgins to protect her from the vampire, who must have "wur-gin blaad" or he finds himself up-chucking in the tub.

The climactic chase and dismemberment scene is on a par with the Black Knight's showdown in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, released the same year, and has Joe dutifully staking the vampire because "he lives off other people, he's no good to anybody and he never was."

The story goes that when Paulette Goddard saw Joe in *Dracula* she proclaimed him a "born star," adding only that he should study ballet and mime so that he might move more gracefully. Moving is precisely what he did.

While Morrissey and company returned to New York, Joe remained on in Italy, beginning both a romance with the beautiful Stefania Cassini (Rubinia in *Dracula*) and a movie career in Europe that he hoped would fashion him into an action star, something like what happened for Eastwood and Bronson.

Of his break with the Warhol group, I tell him I surmise a bitterness and an anger. In two separate interviews he gave to men's "adult" magazines at the time (one featuring a stunning pictorial of he and Cassini, the other in which he declares it to be his last interview ever), he makes remarks removing himself from those people and those movies. "I was brought up a very strict Catholic," he's quoted in *Oui*. "I believe the movies I've made with Andy Warhol are a sin."

I figure that Joe must have understandably felt, as had many others associated with Andy, that he had been used and never duly compensated for the product he had somewhat willingly allowed himself to become.

(Joe verifies that it is indeed a photo of his crotch that adorns the famed zipper-cover of the Rolling Stones' "Sticky Fingers" album. "It was just out of a collection of junk photos that Andy pulled from," he says. "He didn't pull it out for the design or anything, it was just the first one that he got that he felt was the right shape to fit what he wanted to use for the fly. It had nothing to do with anything else. There was no photograph session set up where they were taking shots of crotch areas.")

Meat marketing.

"I was never bitter," Joe explains. "I was angry with them about something that I had a legitimate reason to be angry about. We had made money off of these movies—a very decent amount of money—and Andy was able to

buy (the beach house at) Montauk and Paul was able to buy his brownstone, and even that wasn't my anger. My idea when I made these movies and we started making money was that we start making better movies, because when I got involved with it more and more, I saw that we were doing something that was fairly good and we already had an audience. We were making all this money and yet we weren't taking a dime to fucking repair the camera we were using."

Though it's easy to see his place as the vagabond small time criminal played by Perry King in what turned out to be the Factory's final movie, *Andy Warhol's Bad* (1976), Joe Dallesandro had made his last appearance in a Warhol film. *Bad* was in fact written for him, and he was asked to come back and do it, but he said no. This was a time for Joe to leave the world of Warhol behind him. To get serious about acting. To move on to bigger and better things in a place that allowed for a fresh start.

"My films had been banned there for a long time—the trilogy—and so it was a great thing for me to go do my films in Italy not having an audience there that I had to live up to what I had already done. I could do something completely different and people could appreciate me for that. So I wasn't fighting an image. I was developing an altogether new image."

Much to his disappointment, and certainly that of his fans here in the United States, most of the films Joe made in Europe in the '70s have never made it across the Atlantic.

The inexplicably titled *Season for Assassins* (1974), the earliest of his post-Warhol Italian films that is available on video in this country, is a police potboiler starring Joe as a sadistic youth whose criminal exploits interest the local police chief, a sour and corrupt old coot played by Martin Balsam. (Ernie Borgnine must have been busy.)

Adding considerably to its low-budget aura, everyone has been dubbed except for Balsam. That's right, even Joe's dialogue is dubbed, robbing this nasty little nihilistic action flick of the peculiarly appealing sound of Joe's tough-guy delivery. Unfortunately, Joe was busy with another project and his contract didn't stipulate that they had to use his voice for the final looping, a frequent post-production necessity even for English-speaking actors delivering their lines in their own language when much of the sound recorded while shooting was used strictly as a "wild track."

Je T'aime Moi Non Plus (*I Love You No More*; 1975) provided Joe with probably one of his best roles while in Europe, this time as one of a pair of gay junk men who begins an unusual relationship with a roadside cafe waitress who calls herself Johnny (Jane Birkin), because "I got no tits and a big ass."

Set in what is probably supposed to be the American Southwest, the film's central thrust becomes Joe's attempts to complete his rear-ending of this girl—"boy" before her pulsating screeches of pain get them kicked out of every place in which they try to get it on. Jealous rage on the part of the "other" fellow complicates matters further as the film heads towards its arthouse finale.

Joe shows me a favorite sequence of his from the film (he has a version with Japanese subtitles running along the right side of the screen) and a warm smile registers on his face as he explains how certain shots were done and how he had to drive a Mack truck and nearly went through the front window of the "set" with it.

Even though his role is that of a somewhat sallow youth (and his dialogue is dubbed into French), there is an unexpected vitality in the performance he's showing me, such a far cry from the inexpressive stud of the last three Warhol movies, yet the offbeat story and sexual bent make it prime for crossover appeal to American audiences who know him from the Warhol stuff.

"It was just a fun thing to do," explains Joe, "and it was a real time-right piece—it was done right and if it only would have had some kind of release—you see, the problem with America is you have to shoot the whole damn thing in English. You cannot have anybody—anybody—out of synch."

I can tell Joe is proud of his work on this film. It was a weird set—what with Birkin and her alcoholic boyfriend—



director Gainsbourg—but it was those off-screen tensions and personal imbalances that found their way into the fabric of the film.

Throw Gerard Depardieu in for a mostly inexplicable appearance as a homosexual who rides a big white horse and boasts of tearing men open with his prodigious member, sprinkle lines of dialogue that translate "Love is blind and has a long pink cane" and then compares lovemaking to "synchronous bouts of epilepsy," and you have the bizarre mix for a '70s cult flick just waiting to be discovered.

"My agent said I had to do one art film a year," Joe says almost with an apology in his voice. After all, it's not really the kind of stuff he was looking to do while in Europe. "It was something I wanted to stay away from. I'd had enough of art."

Director Louis Malle had seen Joe in *Heat* and figured him right for the incestuous role of Brother in his highly ambiguous art flick *Black Moon* (1975), a fantasy hodgepodge inspired (sort of) by *Alice in Wonderland*. Described by the director as the "ultimate civil war" between men and women, as well as "about the emotions and fears of puberty," the result is a freaky fairy tale with cinematography by Sven Nykvist and a deliberately distorted soundtrack. Joe hadn't a clue what the hell was going on in this thing. But it didn't matter.

"When Louis Malle wanted to do this movie, *Black Moon*, he came to Italy to visit and I didn't know who Louis Malle was at the time. Remember, if the movie

didn't play on Times Square, I didn't see it. So when I met with him he had no script, but it was all in his head. That's why he was coming down there, to tell me the movie. He started to tell it to me and his English was not all that great—it was good, but not great—and everything to him was so deep, and I'm not all that deep of a person, so all I could do when he finished talking after about 40 minutes was ask him, 'Do you see me doing the role?' And he did."

That a writer or director might see Joe as suited for a particular role is nearly all that's necessary for him to take on the challenge. He's an actor who feeds on a director's faith in him, as it instills both confidence and fires his determination, no matter what the size of the part. For *Black Moon*, "There wasn't much to do in that film, but I gave him everything I could give."

They met at the Venice Film Festival in 1975, and when I ask Joe to tell me about Tennessee Williams he immediately says, "I don't want to tell that story." For a moment it's because I think I've made the mistake of trudging into a hack interviewer's territory with a request for the low-down on a dishy brush with greatness. As it turns out, he is only joking.

Joe was recovering from a nasty car accident suffered just days before he met the playwright. "The time I met Tennessee, I was doing a lot of drinking," he remembers. "We met down at the bar. Before I was even introduced by somebody at the event, he expressed that he was a fan

(continued)

"The goriest and the sexiest 'Frankenstein' ever filmed."

—Kevin Sanders, ABC-TV



"A perversely fascinating original movie."

—Paul D. Zimmerman, Newsweek



"The most outrageously gruesome epic ever."

—Bruce Williamson, Playboy



Andy Warhol's Frankenstein

NO ONE
UNDER 17
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ANDY WARHOL'S "FRANKENSTEIN" • A Film by PAUL MORRISSEY • Starring Joe Dallesandro
Monique Van Vooren • Udo Kier • Introducing Arno Juerging • Dalila Di Lazzaro • Srdjan Zelenovic
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of my work, but he didn't overdo it. He had a way of not making true contact when he talked to you, until such time as he was ready to make the contact. Because when you're famous, you must go through day after day of people coming up and being introduced to you, and you don't want every one of them to connect. It would be too much for your mind. That's what he did with me, but somehow he also took note of who I was. He said 'yeah, I like your work,' but not in a way that I believed it, just in a way of 'okay, let's see what will develop.' So I told him how much I'd been a fan of his work because I'd been introduced to it by Paul Morrissey. Paul had introduced me to a story that Tennessee had written that he thought would make a great movie and he thought that I should do it. So he said I should ask Tennessee that I would like to make this thing called *One Arm*."

One Arm tells the oddly touching story of a boxer named Oliver Winemiller, who loses an arm in a car wreck and thereafter becomes a dispassionate hustler, plying his trade until a gig on a yacht involving filmed sex turns into rage and murder. Winemiller ends up in jail where Johns from all over the country begin writing him appreciative letters.

For perhaps the first time in years, Oliver Winemiller

learns how much he meant to other people and experiences life-affirming self-esteem while awaiting the electric chair. A screenplay is said to exist for this unique story—if so, it may be the only unproduced screenplay Williams ever wrote—but Joe never saw the project get even that far.

"I would have liked to have done it," he admits. "But Tennessee looked at me and said, 'No, you're all wrong for that.' So I talked to him some more, and I notice he's watching the way I'm drinking. Now he's developing an interest. He's seeing that I'm slugging them down, not one time blinking or even showing any signs of being high. I'm exactly the same way I was when I first came in. So he's watched me put down six of them and now he's a little impressed. The relationship develops and he becomes more open. 'I really do like your work,' he says to me. 'Were you being honest with me about *One Arm*? Would you really like to do that?'"

As the conversation and drinking continued, a mutual admiration fostered and it wasn't long before a subplot developed. Recorded elsewhere (in a Williams bio) as a "fainting routine" designed specifically for seduction, Tennessee began to show overt signs of fatigue and Joe ended up helping the histrionic playwright to his hotel

room.

"I'm thinking in my mind, 'yeah, he just wants to get me up there,'" Joe recalls. "I know he's going to make a play for me. Well, we're not up there fifteen minutes and he's on the bed—out. Cold. Gone. I guess he really was tired. So I leave."

Thus began a routine of nightly drinking and help-me-up-to-my-room events. Joe would once more meet up with Williams in Italy, this time during a luncheon in which the writer playfully mocked Stefania Cassini's communist ideals by pointing out all the jewels she was wearing. They were gifts from Joe. Cassini ripped them off and threw them in the river to show she could care less. Joe was not amused, though Tennessee assuredly was.

One Arm could have made a very good film. It was published in 1948 (the year Joe was born), and reading the story today I am struck by how much the tale anticipates a Joe Dallesandro. Morrissey was right. Joe would have been perfect.

In 1976 he co-starred with Sylvia Kristel in *The Streetwalker*, one of celebrated animation genius Walerian Borowczyk's live action outings, as a happily married family man who is beset by prostitutes when traveling on business. He shuns all of them, except for Kristel, while tragedy is striking at home.

The film boasts a high-nudity quotient and even bears a thematic link to the Morrissey films, as the erotic is served up with dire moral consequences. Called upon to get naked again, this time the actor didn't have a director who simply decided to call Joe "Joe," thus a mishap with rose thorns in an early scene provides an excuse to bandage over Joe's tattoo for the rest of the film.

Family tragedy assailed him onscreen and, in 1977, all hell broke loose off-screen as well.

With the breakup of what was left of his marriage in the states, as well as the end of his relationship with actress Cassini, Dallesandro began to spiral deeper and deeper into a pit of alcohol and drug use, returning to a low he'd visited once before in his youth and then managing to sink even lower.

When he got the call from his father that last day of December, he thought it was because it was his birthday. It may have seemed unlikely, even wishful thinking, on his part. As it turned out, what his father had to tell him didn't involve a memory of birth, it was to deliver a message of death. Bobby was dead. Joe's only brother, born just three days shy of exactly one year after Joe, had killed himself on his own birthday.

Joe flew home to identify the body, which hadn't been found until days after the event, and thus it was Joe's grim task to suppose that who he was shown was indeed who the police surmised it to be.

Not even a week later and his foster mother, who had been hospitalized and was ailing at the time of Bobby's death, but had been brought to the services by Joe, succumbed to her illness.

Joe's return to Europe was shrouded in their deaths. The senseless loss of his brother—with whom he shared a psychic bond—still haunts him to this day. "They wind up killing a person they never knew," he says of people who take their own lives. There's an understandable melancholy in his voice when he talks about this dark time in his life, as well as an anger.

He shows me a gorgeous series of professionally shot black and white stills that feature he and his brother (both shirtless) and explains that he once made the mistake of giving one of the series to a fan. Shortly thereafter, copies of the photo showed up at Hollywood still outlets and memorabilia stores. Joe may have been willing to become a commodity, but his brother wasn't for sale. The memories these photos evoke are too precious to be merely marketed as celebrity beefcake.

Joe went into a depression, marked by a substance abuse that should have killed him, but miraculously did not. He continued to find film work here and there, though no matter how much he struggled to do so, he couldn't avoid his association with the strange and off-beat.

In *Queen Lear* (1978), he was cast as a husband who

also sleeps with men. When confronted by his wife, he runs out of the house and gets mowed down by a semi. He does, however, return time and time again in dream sequences after his widow drinks a vial of his sperm (given to her by his male lover) and immaculately conceives a child who wants to know all about his daddy!

He would also work for one of Europe's legendary New Wave corollaries to an Andy Warhol, at least in the sense that he baffles film critics and audiences with his often very long and very extemporaneous films: Jacques Rivette. The film was called *Merry Go Round*, shot in 1978 but not officially released until 1983, and tensions ran high on the set because no one knew what direction the haphazard project was going.

There were also off-camera personal crises going on in the lives of stars Dallesandro, Maria Schneider, and the director himself. It was only when Joe fell off a motorcycle and injured his coccyx that fate intervened on the frustrating shoot.

"I didn't want to, but it was the doctor's advice that I stop," Joe recalls. "I'm the kind of actor who would continue even if a limb was hanging off. The only way they could have left the film and got a breather from it was for me to be injured like that, where the insurance paid everybody. That's what happened. Everyone got paid while I was healing. Rivette was going nutty and Maria was attempting suicide, so this gave us a week to calm down and get it together. Rivette was trying to make this movie last forever—we shot a lot of footage—and it was turning out to be one of those 24 hour movies."

(The director was perfectly capable of doing just that. The original cut of his 1971 film *Out One* had an almost 13-hour running time, and his most well-known arthouse release in America, 1991's *La Belle Noiseuse*, runs four hours. *Merry Go Round* finally came in at 160 minutes.)

One of his last films in Europe, *Killer Nun* (1978), has Joe in a supporting role as the new doctor assigned to the staff of a parish convalescent home where a postoperative, brain-tumored nun (Anita Ekberg) "could freak out at any time." And she does, stomping on an old woman's dentures, messing with the IV's and nearly exercising her wards to death in a scene so ludicrous that one is thankful for Joe's putting a stop to the madness.

His return to the United States in 1979 found him in the grasp of increasing alcohol and drug abuse. He moved from coast to coast, at one point finding his real mother and sharing a trailer with her in Seattle where the two would drink themselves into oblivion. Much more of this and he would surely be dead.

At long last, detox followed and then ALANON meetings and sobriety programs. Looking for gainful employment, he worked for a time as both a cab driver in Los Angeles and then a limo driver, where more than one celebrity rider would recognize him behind the wheel.

Clean and sober, Joe took a shot at the movies again. In 1983, after nearly a decade out of the American limelight, he got his break. Francis Ford Coppola, the director once said to be interested in him for *The Godfather*, cast Joe in the supporting role of Lucky Luciano in *The Cotton Club*. It's a small part, coming at nearly the very end of the film, but Joe's slicked-back hair, classy Italian looks, and brooding demeanor in his very first Hollywood "A" picture seemed far more legitimate than Richard Gere's dress-up act.

He dropped 20 pounds and was looking his best in years when he was hired to play Perfect Tommy on the ill-fated one-season Carl Weathers TV actioner *Fortune Dane* (1986). Other television appearances followed, including roles on *Miami Vice*, *Wiseguy*, HBO's *The Hitchhiker*, and *Matlock*, and as a two-bit criminal in the Telly Savalas made-for-TV entry *The Hollywood Detective* (1989).

A stream of other film roles have come his way on a nearly regular basis. He was an escaped killer trapped in Richard Pryor's hospital setting in *Critical Condition* (1987), a gangster in *Sunset* (1988), a fundamentalist preacher in John Waters' *Cry-Baby* (1990), a bank robber in *Almost An Angel* (1990), the sleazeball guardian who rapes Drew Barrymore at the beginning of *Gun Crazy* (1992), and yet another brooding hood introduced in

Sugar Hill (1994) only to be forgotten about during the film's climax.

In between these supporting ventures into mainstream features, he's also starred in a couple of low-budget exploitation flicks: in *Double Revenge* (1987), he's a ruthless killer who's freed on a technicality, and in *Private War* (a.k.a. *Operation: Paratrooper*; 1989), he's a sadistic soldier with a buzz-cut spouting inane strings of profanity and going psycho with a sword.

Certainly the work has only been occasional, but all in all pretty good for a kid who never figured how far a guy could get just by peeling down to his jockey shorts—pre Calvin Klein, of course. (Ironically, a recent gig had him modeling Calvin Klein jeans in print ads seen all over the country.) What's more, he's a survivor. The list of Warhol-associated casualties is long indeed.

Though he remains ambivalent about his association with them, Joe is also quite sincere in his appreciation for the direction Morrissey and Warhol gave his life. He says, "What I got from the Warhol people was—I had no designs or desires to be an actor, knew nothing about the field—and they gave me a trade, they worked with me, and they gave me a career. I think what happened to the other people is that instead of working and trying to give more, they wanted to get out of it what they could see printed in the paper and that's not what it was about at all. I recognized what I got out of it."

Recognized, yes, but not without a certain degree of "embarrassment" over a cult fame sustained by movies he made two decades ago. He's done so much since then that the constant return to yesteryear can be a little frustrating; which is why he declined the offer to appear in Madonna's "Deeper and Deeper" video, a retro-homage to the New York '60s club scene that featured appearances by Udo Kier, Holly Woodlawn, and eventually, a young long-haired Joe look-a-like who poses in his jockey shorts as Madonna and her girlfriends eat bananas.

He's not listed as a source in a single book of the half-dozen or so that were published in the wake of Andy Warhol's death. I ask him about that and he tells me that he hasn't read any of them, nor cares to do so. He does, however, mention Holly Woodlawn's *A Low Life in High Heels*.

"It's the only book that deserves all of its success," he says with genuine admiration, "and it deserves to be made into a movie because it wasn't somebody making up shit about the Warhol days. It was Holly talking about her life and her situation."

Joe's insistence on living his own life, of not allowing himself to get sucked up into the fame trip, may be why even as a superstar he maintained outsider status. After all, he didn't come to them, he was drafted.

"I never was one of the gang," says Joe matter-of-factly. "I think Andy liked me, but he couldn't talk to me like he talked to the other people. I'm a person that doesn't make chitchat and doesn't like to make chitchat, so I'm not going to sit there and ramble on while he tape-recorded me. I didn't go to any of their parties. I didn't go to any of the gatherings they went to, because I really didn't feel comfortable with them. They were too phony. They weren't real."

In April, 1971, *Vogue* magazine wrote of Joe: "His blank-faced ways draw comparisons to Dietrich and Garbo. . . . For young film fans crazy with nostalgia, Dallesandro's attraction is much like that of Chaplin's Little Tramp: the winning, superior charm of a David against all the Goliaths, the triumph of an effortless innocence over a society that leans too hard on the little guys."

When I spoke to Paul Morrissey by phone, he told me he saw Joe as an Alan Ladd or Charles Bronson-type, the strong silent type unfettered by "acting school crap."

"I don't think good actors need acting classes," Morrissey explained. "It makes them too self-conscious. Acting talent is what you see. They're a good actor or they're a bad actor. No acting class teaches you to be a hero. They just teach you to be an emotional basket case or a lower class creep."

"I never went to that school," says Joe. "I never went to the New York school of acting. I came from the New

FILMOGRAPHY

THE LOVES OF ONDINE (1967)
LONESOME COWBOYS (1967)
SAN DIEGO SURF (1968)
FLESH (1968)*
TRASH (1970)
ANDY WARHOL AND HIS CLAN (1970 - German documentary)
HEAT (1972)
THE GARDENER (SEEDS OF EVIL - 1974)
ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN (1974)
ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA (1974)
DONNA E BELLO (1974)
SEASON FOR ASSASSINS (1974)
BLACK MOON (1975)
CALORE IN PROVINCIA (1975)
FANGO BOLLENTE (1975)
JE T'AIME MOI NON PLUS (I LOVE YOU NO MORE - 1975)
L'AMBIZIOSO (THE CLIMBER - 1975)
LA MARGE (THE STREETWALKER - 1976)
L'ULTIMA VOLTA (1976)
MERRY GO ROUND (1978 - released in 1983)
UN CUORE SEMPLICE (1978)
SUOR OMICIDIO (KILLER NUN - 1978)
QUEEN LEAR (1978)
6000 KM DI PAURA (1979)
TAPAGE NOCTURNE (1979)
THE COTTON CLUB (1984)
CRITICAL CONDITION (1987)
DOUBLE REVENGE (1987)
SUNSET (1988)
PRIVATE WAR (1989)
SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ANDY WARHOL (1989 - documentary short; footage from '70's)
CRY-BABY (1990)
ALMOST AN ANGEL (1990)
SUPERSTAR: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDY WARHOL (1991)**
GUN CRAZY (1992)
LOVE IS LIKE THAT (1992)
WILD ORCHID 2: TWO SHADES OF BLUE (1992)
SUGAR HILL (1994)
T-REX (1995) - as yet, unreleased

TELEVISION CREDITS

FORTUNE DANE (1986)
PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST: ANDY WARHOL (1987 - British)**
MIAMI VICE (mid-80's)
WISEGUY (1987)
THE HOLLYWOOD DETECTIVE (1989)
MATLOCK (1989/90 SEASON)
THE HITCHHIKER (HBO)
INSIDE/OUT [PLAYBOY AT NIGHT: "THE DIARIES"] (1992)

* - For the record, the running time on FLESH is 90 minutes, as indicated on the videocassette, not the 105 minutes listed in every film reference book and review since it came out in 1968. Director Morrissey has confirmed that there is no missing or extant footage.

The wrong length was printed once and the error has simply been repeated.

** - indicates compilation film; no new footage

York school of the streets. Then I was told, 'okay, now you're an actor—learn camera movement, positioning, and just tell me what you know already.' And what I knew already was street talk."

Still dealing with the breakup of his third marriage (which lasted seven years), today Joe Dallesandro is committed to being a working actor. He continues to seek roles while putting his famed past in proper perspective.

He seems genuinely appreciative of his fans, though sometimes context dictates that response. Some people send him nude stills of himself and ask him to autograph them. It isn't shame that causes him not to sign, it's simply a matter of what he feels is appropriate and what he does not.

His fans look forward to each and every appearance, no matter what size the role or when it will come. For Joe Dallesandro fans, I think, it's less important he's given leads than it is he still shows up somewhere, anywhere—that this kid from the streets is still making movies. ■

STEVE REEVES

The World's Favorite Hercules

Very little has been written about the early years of Steve Reeves; and his remarkable contribution to world cinema has rarely been discussed in serious journalistic terms. And yet the life and career of Reeves is of a fascinating and unique nature — the stuff of which The Movies are made.

Steve Reeves was born in Glasgow, Montana, a healthy and robust child of Welsh, Irish, German and English heritage, on January 21, 1926. His father was a rancher who also did carpentry and was a contractor. When Steve was only six months old his mother entered him in his first contest in which he received the title of "Most Healthiest Baby" in Danials County. By the age of three, Reeves was able to ride horseback on his own — the beginning of a lifelong love of horses.

Later, during his last year of junior high school in Oakland, California, Steve discovered bodybuilding. He worked out with friends and eventually purchased a 200 lb. set of used weights and turned the family garage into his workout gym. Within a month he was enrolled in the training methods and nutritional guidance at the gym of noted bodybuilding coach Ed Yarick in Oakland.

After more than two years of hard work and dedication to bodybuilding, Reeves had developed a truly phenomenal body. Friends told him repeatedly that he should become a wrestler, a dancer, or an actor in the movies because of his good looks and amazing musculature. He graduated from high school in 1944, and on September 12 of that year reported to the Precidio of Monterey for induction into the Army.

After basic training, Reeves received orders to ship out to the Philippines; his assignment was on the front lines in Luzon. Steve belonged to Company A of the 25th Division which was involved in the taking of Balete Pass. He was assigned to Japan after the Allied occupation and stationed on Nokkaido Island. Steve was released from the Army at the war's end, following 26 months of service. On



September 18, 1946, he finally stood again on good old American terra firma.

The harrowing experiences and sights of the war had changed his life, as it had certainly changed everyone's. But it was amidst the horrors of war that the young man planned what he'd do after the war. Often he would block out the casualties and death that surrounded him with thoughts of a better time to come at the conclusion of the war. He had decided to become a movie star.

Steve Reeves didn't merely become famous; he became world famous. *Hercules* was neither his first film nor his last, but it is the film for which he is most universally acclaimed, and the type of role that he continued in for much of his career. It fired the Italian film industry and launched an entire

genre of productions — perhaps 180 films made in a six year time period.

Although anything approaching a definitive Steve Reeves biography or an exhaustive history of the Italian "Sword & Sandal" films of the 1950s and '60s is sorely lacking, we are proud to present this in-depth interview with Steve Reeves — perhaps his first in any movie magazine since the 1960s. It was conducted this year by George Helmer, founder of the Steve Reeves International Society. Selected questions were compiled by Stephen Flacassier, author of "Muscles, Myths and Movies," easily the most satisfying volume on the "Hercules" films yet published in the English language. *Cult Movies* readers will assuredly honor both gentlemen for their pioneering work in documenting this sometimes underrated period in film history and keeping it alive.

Films of Steve Reeves

- 1954 *Athena*
- Jailbait*
- 1957 *Hercules*
- 1958 *Hercules Unchained*
- 1959 *Goliath and the Barbarians*
- White Warrior*
- Giant of Marathon*
- 1960 *Thief of Baghdad*
- Morgan the Pirate*
- 1961 *Duel of the Titans*
- The Trojan War*
- Last Days of Pompeii*
- 1962 *Son of Spartacus*
- 1963 *Sandokan the Great*
- The Shortest Day*
- 1964 *Pirates of the Seven Seas*
- Long Ride From Hell*

Steve also appeared in many TV programs:

Kimba (TV pilot), Love That Bob, Burns And Allen, Topper, The Nelsons, Dina Shore Show, etc.

Become a Member of the Steve Reeves International Society

We are excited at the adventure we have embarked upon with the help of Steve Reeves. We have many plans for the future and want you to participate in these endeavors with us. The organization was founded by George Helmer, with the express approval of Steve Reeves. The Steve Reeves International Society promotes overall well-being, both physically and mentally. We are committed to ensure that Steve's integrity and image are never compromised. The society is totally dedicated to this living legend.

We have been publishing a very exciting and informative quarterly newsletter since January 1995. Each newsletter contains 12 pages of great stories and valuable information, including articles on Steve's training and nutritional practices and a continuing series of biographical pieces on Reeves' life. You are given a wonderful, in-depth look inside his movies and the world that surrounded them. There are news briefs and a classified ad section where you can buy and sell Steve Reeves collectibles! We offer special limited pro-

duction (collector) items plus great looking T-shirts, beverage mugs, videos, Reeves calendars and much more.

Get your one-year newsletter subscription and lifetime membership in the Steve Reeves International Society for only \$20.00!!! Send check or money order to:

Steve Reeves International Society
P O Box 2625
Malibu, CA 90265

Steve Reeves Photos

Here is your chance to get a personally autographed photo of Steve Reeves. You can choose from either (a) movie, (b) bodybuilding, or any combination of the two categories. Just state your selection and send \$15.00 for 2 photos, or \$20.00 for 4 photos. Send check or money order to: Steve Reeves Classic Image Enterprises, PO Box 807, Valley Center, CA 92082.

New Steve Reeves Fitness Book Coming Soon!

For over 40 years the name of Steve Reeves has been synonymous with incredible muscle mass, superb lines and unmatched shape, proportion and symmetry. Thousand of fans, just like you, have

asked for his secrets on how to build such a fabulous body. Now, for the first time, Steve Reeves has put pen to paper (along with amassing the greatest collection of awe-inspiring photographs) to create what many are saying will be the greatest natural bodybuilding book of all time, "Building The Classic Physique, The Natural Way."

Reeves built his superb physique in a day when drugs were unheard of. As a result, he developed a keen insight into the TRUE requirement of advanced levels of muscle growth, nutrition, definition, fat loss and shape building for the natural bodybuilder. This book is his legacy. Within its pages lie the knowledge acquired from a lifetime of real bodybuilding. A sample of what's in store includes: Nutrition, Losing Bodyfat, Reeve's Championship Training Routines, the Power of Walking, a Seminar with Steve Reeves, and much more. A book of this magnitude only comes along once in a lifetime!

To order your copy, send \$29.95 (plus \$5.00 shipping & handling/overseas and Canada add \$10.00 S&H). Personal autographed copy add additional \$5.00 and the name of the individual you want it autographed to. Send to: Steve Reeves Book 2650 W. Agoura Road, Suite 502, Calabasas, CA 91302



Steve Reeves Speaks!

Interviewed by George Helmer

CM: You may still be the best known body builder in the world. Prior to you the best known person into physical culture was Eugen Sandow. Was he an influence on you?

Steve Reeves: John Grimek had a direct influence on me because he was of my time. You could see pictures of him in the magazines, and at contests or social gatherings.

CM: Bodybuilding was something that wasn't considered a sport by the average person back in the 1940s, was it? It wasn't taken too seriously.

SR: People didn't consider it a sport, that's true. They thought it was a get-in-shape hobby. My friends and family didn't see much of a living in it unless a person could open a gym. My friends thought it was a good way to socialize and to compete. It is a sport in the respect that you compete — against the weights and other people

in the gym. Then ultimately you compete against other bodybuilders on the stage. So in that respect it is a competitive sport.

CM: Did you think of bodybuilding as a way of breaking into acting in films?

SR: Not really. Actually, having the build that I did was a detriment at first. I went to Universal Studios and had an interview. They told me that I was a good looking guy and was tall and everything. They could put me under contract like Tony Curtis and Rock Hudson but the trouble is I had that big physique and they could only use me in one movie a year. It would be a very limited use situation, maybe because I made their other male contract players look weak by comparison. So it was a disadvantage for many years, but then when the right films came along it pushed me way ahead. And although I've been out of the limelight for the past 25 years, I consider it a great honor to still be recognized for my work in bodybuilding and films.

CM: Today's style of bodybuilding has been called "freaky for the sake of being freaky," as compared to the massive yet symmetrical build you're so well known for. Which do you think best reflects the sport of bodybuilding?

SR: First of all, I think to be fit and in shape is a great thing. But it shouldn't dominate and rule your life. I believe your life should be balanced. I would recommend that a person have a symmetrical, classical type physique. It's more desirable to the general public, although a few fans like that extreme bulked up steroid type physique. I'm glad more people are getting into the sport. Back in the '40s we never would have imagined that a machine like a Soloflex could be brought into a person's living room, because we didn't even have that kind of equipment in the gyms at the time. In the big gyms we had only barbells, dumbbells, leg press machines and wall pulleys. That was about it!

CM: Your first dramatic acting was in live theater wasn't it?

SR: I was in *Kismet* for two years in which I played one of the guards and sang in the quartet. I was in *The Vamp* with Carol Channing which was playing on Broadway. In the New York Catskills I was in *Wish You Were Here* and continued acting in it for a year when it went to Sacramento. It gave me some very good experience.

My acting career started in 1947 after I had won the Mr. America contest. Knowing that I couldn't have the big body and be an actor I dropped about 10 pounds. The camera puts 10 or 15 extra pounds on you and you want to trim down for the movies. I went to acting school in New York City since I wasn't getting the acting jobs I wanted. I continued working on my body and won another bodybuilding contest, then lost the weight again and started acting once again. This went on until 1957 when I made *Hercules*. That changed everything for me.

CM: For many years most of your official bio's didn't mention that your first film was *Jail Bait* for director Ed Wood. Now that Wood is getting so much attention, do you mind being associated with that film and his work?

SR: No, not at all. It was actually my first film and that's where I got my Screen Actors Guild card. While the film was in production it was called *The Hidden Face*. Later on when they released it they changed it to *Jail Bait*, which does sound like it would sell better. I liked working with Ed Wood, and thought he was a nice man and a good director. He kind of let you do what you wanted and guided you very slightly, not trying to dominate every move you made.

CM: How were you approached to do the part?

SR: My agent heard that they were going to make the picture and read the script and thought it would be a good film for me to start with. In the movie I think I only had my shirt off for five seconds. There was no screen test or anything; I interviewed with the director and he said I would be good for the part.

I didn't have that big of a part in the film and so there was no difficulty for me. I didn't have to work that many hours in one day or remember much dialogue. It wasn't difficult at all, and since it was my first role it was quite a good adventure.

CM: In Wood's biography *Nightmare Of Ecstasy* it's said that it required numerous takes just

(continued)

to film you putting on your necktie; while the impression from Wood's films is that they're one-take wonders. Do you remember this shot being a tough one?

SR: I don't remember the shot but knowing Ed Wood he would never take more than four shots regardless. Being used to wearing tee-shirts and sweatshirts it might have been difficult for me to tie a tie. I can tell you this, though — I had to furnish all my own suits, jackets, pants, shoes and so forth, since they had no money for a wardrobe. I knew it was an inexpensive film, but I wanted to get into movies and this seemed like a good picture to start with.

CM: Your second film was called *Athena*, which gave you less acting to do but highlighted your physique more. Did you consider this a step back?

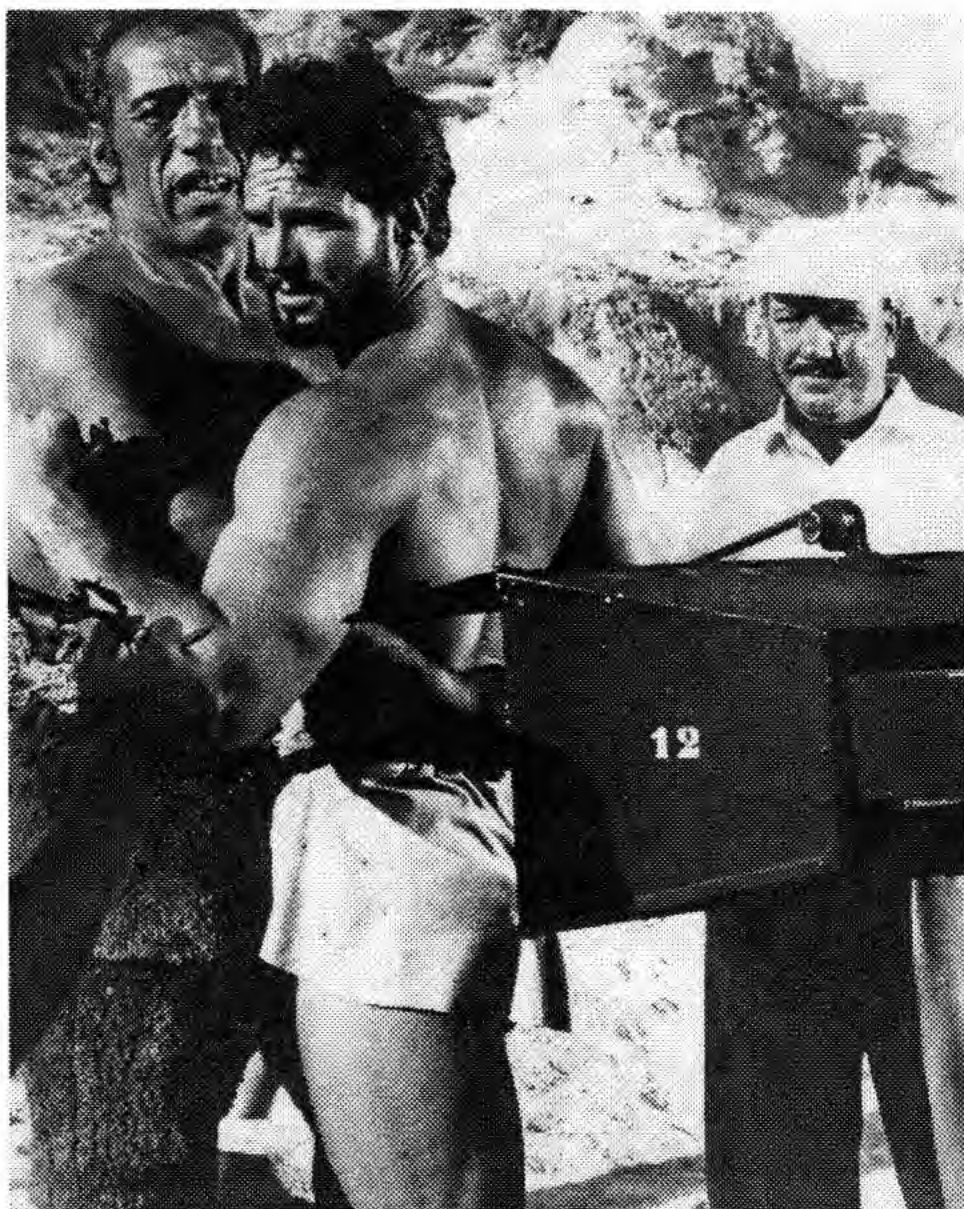
SR: I didn't think it was back-stepping; I thought it was a step up. It was a color picture, which was a musical comedy and had big stars like Debbie Reynolds, Jane Powell and Vic Damone. I felt that this movie was going to give me a lot of exposure, which it did. I was hoping it would be more successful than it was, like *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers*, which was a very successful film. It's true I didn't have as much dialogue as I wished, but that's the way it goes. That movie is where I was discovered to play Hercules, so how can I complain!

Athena was a big budget film. The one day of shooting, the guy who played the boyfriend of Debbie Reynolds had to come into the scene and walk up to Debbie; he said, "Hi girls, hi Debbie!" Of course her name in the film was Minerva, so they had to shoot the scene over. So they took it from the top again and he does his lines, and as he's lifting up a box his pants were too tight and he ripped out the entire backside. He wasn't wearing any undershorts and his entire butt was sticking out. His stage name at the time was Richard Saber; he was also Mr. America and next to me he had the most important part as far as physique actors were concerned.

CM: And then your next film was *Hercules*. Over the years a lot has been said about your working relationship with Joseph E. Levine, the producer. One time it's Levine who's raking in the dough from the movies while you're just taking home a paycheck. Another report has Levine being left out in the cold after making a few high ticket movies while you cashed in on the popularity and doing more films. What really happened?

SR: The truth of the matter is that I made *Hercules* over in Italy and Levine didn't know anything about it. Not until it was released all over Europe did his agent know anything about it. He was buying films for Levine, and I believe he bought *Ulysses* — a film which proved to do pretty good for him. He had a friend in Rome who looked for films to buy. When *Hercules* came out it was the biggest box office draw in Italy and all over Europe, and Levine said, "Well, I better get that one to the States." Levine bought it for the United States and released it during the summer of 1959. I made that film in the summer of 1957, so there was a two year delay. I must say that Levine was a good promoter and showman and he put a lot of money behind the publicity for *Hercules*. He bought it for a very reasonable amount, and bought it for the United States only, not even all of North America. All his money went into promoting it.

The same producer and director had a script all



(Above) Technicians prepare to film a fight scene between Reeves and Primo Carnera in *Hercules Unchained*. (opposite page, top) The fight begins as Reeves puts the former boxing and wrestling champ in a headlock. (opposite page, bottom) Reeves prepares to finish off Carnera.

ready to go for the sequel, *Hercules Unchained*. I had no other offers at the time, so I returned to Italy and made the film.

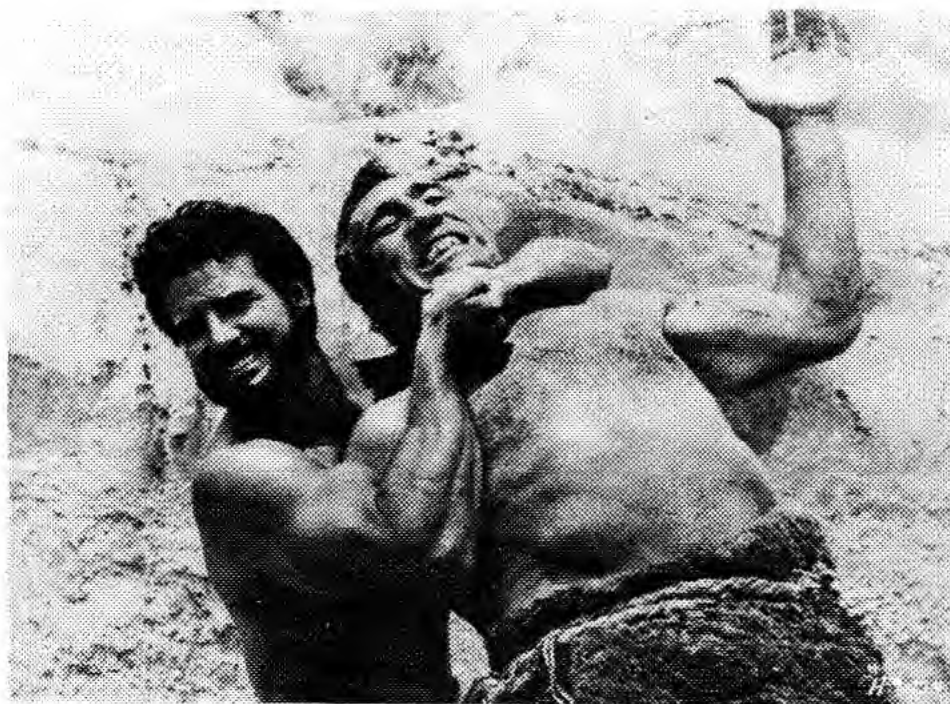
When I made *Hercules Unchained*, Levine bought that one up too, this time getting United States and Canada. He had nothing to do with producing the second film either; it was already finished when he bought it. I was already on my fourth or fifth film by the time he bought *Hercules* and the second film, *Hercules Unchained*. He bought both films but didn't participate in the production in any way. Then he wanted to sign me up for a third *Hercules* film, but I convinced him to do *Morgan The Pirate* instead. Definitely Levine made more money off my films than anybody. Other people made money also, but Levine made more than anyone else on the first two films. On those two pictures I made very little money.

CM: Did you have a good working relationship with the man — any ideas how these rumors started?

SR: Not really. Levine was an egomaniac. I would say that we would have a good working

relationship until his ego came in. We had a contract for one of the films — it could have been *Morgan The Pirate* or *Thief of Baghdad*. The contract stated that I would have my name 70 percent the size of the title, and no actor or producer could get more than 50 percent of the title. He wanted his name to be as big or bigger than mine. I said, "No Joe, you signed the contract stating that mine was to be the first name above everybody else and 70 percent of the title; we have a contract." This was in the Hotel Excelsior in Rome and he was eating a big bowl of spaghetti. He got so mad he threw his plate up and spaghetti was dripping from the chandelier and all over the place; it was a mess. If he wanted the contract to read differently we could have negotiated something else for a price, but he just wanted to take the glory.

When he re-released *Hercules* and *Hercules Unchained* in 1977 he contacted me and said, "Would you go around and make personal appearances for me when the show opens in Dallas, New York, Chicago, and about seven other cities?" I said that I would, and he asked, "How much are you going



to charge me?" I said that I didn't need much, just my expenses and five hundred dollars each day, which is nothing. He thought that was too much and said, "Oh hell, I can get some musclemen jerks from the gyms in each of those towns — do you want me to do that?" I told him to go ahead, and that's just what he did. For crying out loud, I gave him that price because I felt I was giving him a more than fair value for my time. These days when I do events I charge somewhere around a thousand dollars an hour, or if I stay three hours I'll do it for two thousand dollars. I was certainly worth more in those days than I am today. But Levine — five hundred dollars a day for old times sake yet he wanted all the money.

CM: The inevitable question has to be; while filming *Hercules*, did you ever dream it would be so successful around the world?

SR: Naturally I was hoping so, but you never dream of it. If I would have imagined what was going to happen, I wouldn't have had to come back and get a job in the States. After filming the first one, I came back home and went back work-

ing for American Health Studios as an instructor in their gyms for six months. I found out how popular *Hercules* was and they brought me back for the second one. By the time I finished the second film I signed for a third and fourth. I knew success was there at that time. I had no idea that *Hercules*, my first starring role, would be the most successful picture in the world. Not only in the United States but the entire world in 1959. I was top box office here, and in Calcutta India it played four showings a day 365 days a year for two years. It was also a huge success in Japan and throughout Asia. I had no idea, if I would have had that knowledge I would have cashed in on it. I would have gone to Japan and done commercials like Stallone and those guys do today. Stallone and Schwarzenegger go over and make commercials for Japan only and make a fortune.

CM: Was that your own voice in these films?

SR: It was my own voice in the American films, but not in the others. They tried to match my voice as close as possible in the other films. When they shot the film they had my voice recorded in En-

glish, but the woman doing the part of Yoli was speaking Italian and another person was speaking French; also they had airplanes going over all the time so they couldn't use the soundtrack. What they did was mail the scripts and soundtracks which they did have to New York and got radio actors to dub the voices and re-create the sounds. It was less expensive to do it that way than pay my expenses and salary to dub my own voice.

CM: Sylva Koscina plays your wife in both *Hercules* films. Did these films have the same effect on her career as it did yours?

SR: She was a Yugoslavian girl who was working in Rome and had done a few small parts. *Hercules* really launched her career and she did very well ever after. She did the film completely in Italian because she came from the part of Yugoslavia that spoke Yugoslavian as well as Italian. She was a nice person to work with and since it was my first big film I was more concerned with what I was doing rather than what the other people were doing.

CM: This film also has you with Mimmo Palmara. While the two of you couldn't exactly be considered a team, most of your movies have Palmara somewhere in the background — no matter what production team is making the film. What can you tell us about him?

SR: Mimmo Palmara was a large Italian at about six foot one and about two hundred pounds. When I had an adversary, they didn't want me to have someone five foot six and a hundred pounds. It wouldn't look very good! They got the biggest guy they could find that could act and had a face with a lot of character and good physique. That's why we used him so many times. After the first movie I had complete approval of all the cast, directors and anything else, and never found it necessary to object to anybody. They always put the right people in the cast.

CM: Since *Hercules* was the first, did they run into any unforeseen production problems, such as getting costumes?

SR: They had done a lot of costume films in Italy before ours, for the local market there. Of course they did; they had *Quo Vadis* with Robert Taylor which was a Roman film. We used a lot of costumes from that film for the extras in my films. They made special costumes for the main stars for every picture. But they do have warehouses of costumes for Greek pictures they can fall back on.

CM: How was Mario Bava to work with?

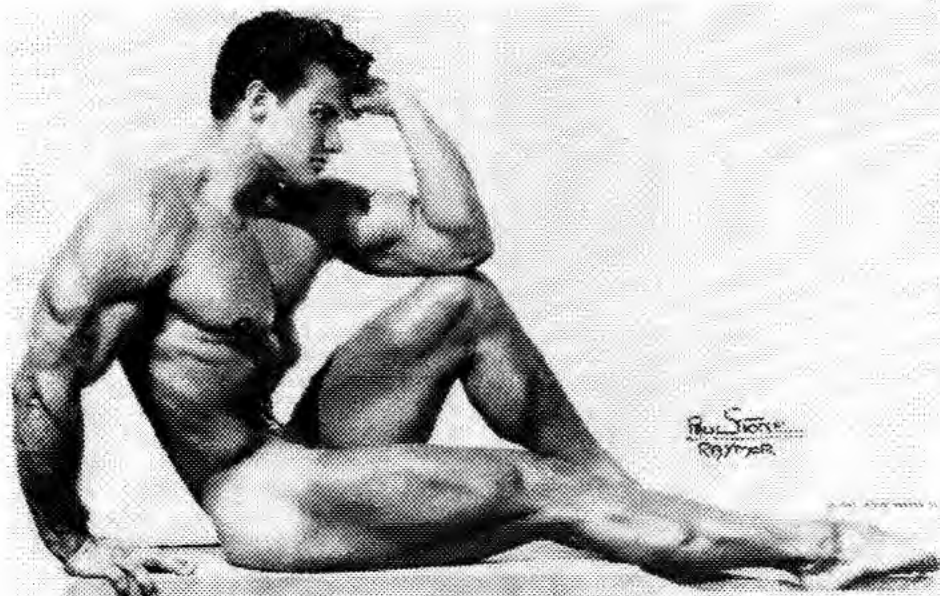
SR: Mario Bava I remember very well. He was a great cameraman and good for special effects. Later he wasn't satisfied in being a cameraman because he knew all the set ups the directors had used and for years and years had been a cameraman and made these creative decisions. He got more ambitious and made a bunch of vampire type movies, horror films that he became known for.

CM: Your next big epic was *Goliath And The Barbarians*. How soon after *Hercules* was this made?

SR: It was six months after filming *Hercules Unchained*. There was *Hercules*, *Hercules Unchained*, *The White Warrior*, which was made in Yugoslavia, and then *Goliath and the Barbarians*. Obviously, *Hercules* was already playing in Europe by then, but not yet in America.

These films were so successful I should have

(continued)



been getting better contracts. But I had an agent by the name of Mitchell Gurtis who sold me down the river for *Hercules Unchained*. They contacted him and said that they wanted me for *Hercules Unchained*; not only didn't he get a raise for me, they gave me the same amount for the second movie that I'd made on the first. He got himself a free around-the-world trip for negotiating it that way, not giving me a raise.

I think the producer of *Goliath and the Barbarians* was a new producer just going into producing and he wanted something that would be a sure thing. After seeing the success of the Hercules films, he thought he'd make another picture of the same genre but not call it Hercules because other people had that name tied up. He utilized the popularity of Hercules to launch that film and his own success.

Bruce Cabot of *King Kong* fame was one of the other stars — a real nice guy. I think he played the father of one of the barbarian girls.

CM: A lot of your co-stars in the films ended up portraying Hercules in later films. Did that bother you at all?

SR: When that genre really exploded many people got involved, but it never bothered me. Alan Steele was Italian and my stunt double in one of my films. I forgot what his real name was but it was a very long name, so he took an American name. I believe he made a couple of the reasonably low Hercules films.

When they made *Romulus and Remus* they wanted me to play the parts of both twins. In those days they didn't have the technology that they have today, so we said, "Let's get another actor to play my brother." Like who? I thought of all the guys I'd known who were about the same height, good build and nice looking and said, Gordon Scott. In the contract I said I would do the movie if they got Gordon Scott. They thought this demand of mine could hold up production if Gordon wanted too much money. They contacted him and got him for much more than he ever made before, but not as much as they thought they were going to have to pay. I've known Gordon Scott since we were teenagers and was glad to have him in this film. It helped re-launch his career after the Tarzan series had spiraled down.

I never worked with Reg Park, but he made a

couple of Hercules films. Again, his films played in only a few countries, whereas mine were sold worldwide, so it never had much impact on what I was doing one way or another. I used to get dozens of scripts; since I didn't want to work that much, I'd do three films per year and other actors would make the remaining films.

CM: You made a film called *The Avenger*, which is a pretty unspectacular outing for you.

SR: The reason I did that film is that I had done *The Trojan Horse* (aka *War Of Troy*) and I had a two picture contract with these same people. They chose the second one to be the sequel and filmed it one year later. I agree, the second one wasn't as good and it wasn't as successful.

CM: *Sandokan the Great* was even more of a departure from the time line of the rest of your films.

SR: The author of that was Amilio Salgarey, who was the Jules Verne of Italy. Sandokan is something that all school children in Italy read and tend to admire. The Italians thought it would be a big moneymaker and good for Italy. They thought the rest of the world would like it too. I

enjoyed doing the film.

CM: Since Sandokan was an established fictional character, were there any plans to do more films with him if this one took off?

SR: We did two "Sandokans" and again it was a two picture deal. One did so well that we did the follow up. The first was called *Sandokan The Great* or *Sandokan the Tiger*, and the second was *Pirates of the Seven Seas* or *Sandokan the Pirate* depending on what country it was released in. The first was filmed in Italy, Ceylon and Spain. The second was filmed in Italy, Spain and Greece.

It was good to get off the old back lot for these films. Traveling was one of the best parts of acting. I was able to go to all those countries, see the different cultures, taste the foods, take in all the spectacular views of nature and observe all the different mannerisms of the people.

CM: Another of your great films is *Giant of Marathon*, which is my favorite of all the films in the genre. The film goes pretty much by the book until the ending, when you and your loyal guards take to the ocean with nothing more than what look like sharpened telephone poles to sink ships. The fighting was pretty spectacular! Did you know this was going to be such a dynamic climax to the film?

SR: The actor always knows what's going to be in the climax of the film because he has the script to read. You know what's going to happen, though they might surprise you a little by modifying it slightly at the end if they see something more workable.

The underwater scenes were filmed in about three days in the very clear waters off of Capri.

CM: Given your build and how little you're wearing, I can't imagine they used a stunt double for you in all those shots. It's obviously you. Was there any concern for your safety with this long underwater filming?

SR: They are always concerned for your safety but what the productions always do is give you the most dangerous scene to be done on the last two days, whether it appears in the movie in the middle or at the start. If something happened to you by then, they had the movie all wrapped up. Underwater you do what you can, then come up for air and rest a while, then get back down there





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and do another shot. I'm a pretty good swimmer, so it's just all part of the job.

I've had a pretty diverse career, doing pirate films, westerns and so forth. One thing I'd say is that I'd never play a villain type role. My audience

thought of me as a hero, and I thought of myself as a hero and that's how I wanted to represent myself. So that's the way it went.

But I was comfortable playing any swashbuckling hero type. There was no need to change my

type of role as far as I could see. I wanted to do a Western, and I did get to do that in my last film. It was almost the same thing as the sword and sandal films except you had different garb on—a cowboy outfit instead of a Greek toga.

CM: The Western film is *Long Ride To Hell*, which is your last film to date. It's said that you were offered the lead in Leone's film *A Fistful Of Dollars* but turned it down because of the bloodshed. After the Italian Westerns became successful and took the place the sword and sandal films had on the backlot, it's said you made this one to either counter or, as everyone else did to you, cash in on them.

SR: Number one, I didn't refuse *Fistful Of Dollars* because it was bloody. I didn't care about the blood. I refused it for three reasons. First of all, I didn't think an Italian could make a good Western. I'm a man of the West, born in Montana and have uncles that have 50,000 acres of cattle ranches. My family have been World Championship Rodeo Cowboys, so I'm a man of the West. I wanted to see the Western done as it should be done, with authenticity. I thought the Italians wouldn't have the feel for it. The film was based on a Japanese film by Kurosawa, almost shot for shot. That's mainly why I didn't want to get involved.

The director is someone I'd worked with before; he was listed as the assistant director of the first unit on *Last Days Of Pompeii*. The main director, Mario Benar was a man of age and didn't have too much energy; so he let Sergio Leone do all the directing. I worked with him before and we got along real well. But I just didn't want to do that

(continued)



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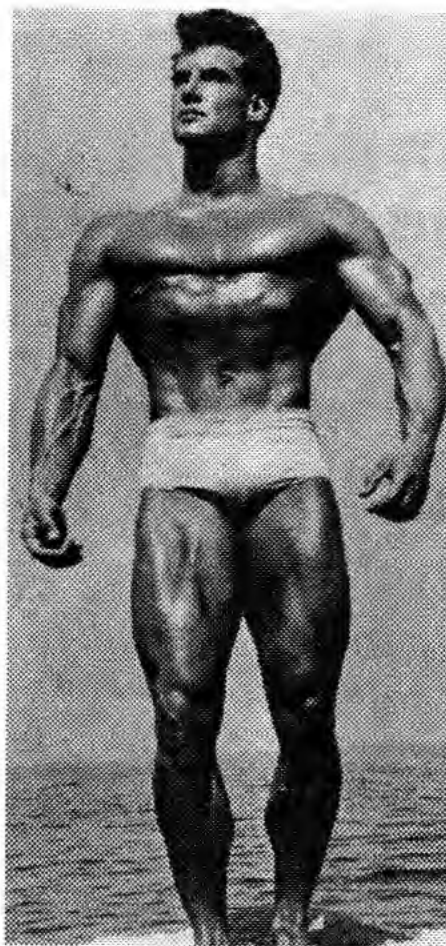
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particular film.

But I still wanted to do a Western someday. I was living in a small chalet in Lucerne, Switzerland when I wasn't shooting. One winter I read over one hundred paperback Westerns, because I wanted to do a Western. I came across three I liked real well. I contacted this literary agent in New York City and asked him to check into those three and see if I could get an option to buy. He checked into it and got back to me in a couple of weeks and said that two of them Clint Walker had an option on and the third John Wayne had an option on. He said that he understood that within a month one of these was going to be available. I waited for a month and luckily, out of all the hundred books I read, the one I wanted most did become available. It was called *Judas Gun* by Gordon Sherreffs who sold *Rio Bravo* to John Wayne and *Last Train From Gun Hill* to Kirk Douglas. Gordon is a great Western writer. I took an option on it for ten thousand dollars. All you have to do is put down a thousand dollars and within a year if you want it you pay nine thousand dollars and it's yours.

Well, within six months I got a production company that wanted to do it. I got an Italian writer who would work with me. I was the technical director and I wanted to make sure that the saddles were right and had the right type of bridles and that the costumes were right. I enjoyed doing the picture but it was quite stressful for me because I was the star, the co-author, technical director, and I had a piece of the production so it required all my attention. Mainly I enjoyed it because it was something I'd wanted to do for years. Clint Eastwood was doing his Westerns but producers couldn't quite see me doing these because they thought of me as Hercules only. One time I put on my Western clothes and went in for



a conference with the head of one of the studios in Italy, and he said *maybe* he could see me as a

cowboy, but in his mind he could only picture me in Roman togas.

CM: On the poster for *Long Ride To Hell* it's not your body they use where they try to link this to your Hercules films. Whose idea was it to use someone else on the poster?

SR: The distributor has control of that, as well as most aspects of selling the film. I have no idea who's body or face they used on the poster.

CM: We find your name attached to George Pal's film of *Doc Savage*; what happened there?

SR: I did go and meet with the people. George Pal was going to do this *Doc Savage* and he chose a director who was a real enthusiast about me. George Pal wasn't really a writer, he was a producer and had good ideas. At that time all the Hollywood writers were on strike. George Pal put this together the best he could with his ability, but he was not a top professional writer. So the director and I looked at the script and thought we needed to make some changes; a lot of things weren't sounding very realistic on paper. There were some delays and they ended up not using me or the director. That's when Ron Ely got the part. I think Ron did a good job, but the overall film wasn't that great.

CM: Do you consider yourself fully retired now?

SR: I might still make a feature film, but I mainly concentrate on the horses now. I see the new films that come out and I enjoy some of them. People talk about the impact of violence in today's films. I think the public is so used to the violence that they kind of demand it now. They feel let down if there aren't a few buildings blown up and a few hundred people killed, lots of car chases and so on. It is a sure way to sell tickets, but sometimes I wonder if it's the only way. ■

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The Art of Pantomime

by **Charles Chaplin**

Charlie Chaplin is considered the world's greatest master of the art of pantomime. In the following article written in the early 1930s, Mr. Chaplin discusses the great art which he strove so hard to preserve.



Pantomime has always been the universal means of communication. It existed as the universal tool long before language was born. Pantomime serves well where languages are in conflict as a result of common ignorance. Primitive folk used the sign language before they were able to form the intelligible word.

At what point in the world's history panto-



mime first made its appearance is speculative. Undoubtedly it greatly antedates the first records of its part in Greek culture. It reached a high development in Rome and was a distinct factor in the medieval mystery plays. Ancient Egypt was adept in its use and, in the sacrificial rites of Druidism and in the war dances of the aborigines of all lands, it had a fixed place.

Pantomimelies at the base of any form of drama. In the silent form of photoplay, it is the keynote. In the vocal form, it must always be an essential because non-visual drama leaves altogether too much to the imagination.

Action is more generally understood than words. The lift of an eyebrow, however faint, may convey more than a hundred words. Listen to a description of some unfamiliar object — an African wart-hog, for example; then describe it. Observe a picture of the animal and note the variety

of astonishment.

I am a comedian and I know that pantomime is more important in comedy than it is in pure drama. It may be even more effective in farce than in straight comedy. Most comedy depends on swiftness of action, and an event can happen and be laughed at before it can be told in words.

Of course, pantomime is invaluable in drama, too, because it serves to effect the gradual transition from farce to pathos or from comedy to tragedy much more smoothly and with less effort than speech can ever do.

Pantomime, I have always believed and still believe, is the prime qualification of a successful screen player. A truly capable actor must possess a thorough grounding in pantomime. Consider the Irvings, Coquelins, Bernhardtts, Duses, Mansfields and Booths and you will find, at the root of their art, pantomime. ■

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Chickening Out: Don Knotts' Ghost & Mr. Chicken Finally Makes it to Home Video

By Steve Cox

"Calm? Calm? Do murder and calm go together? Calm and murder? Murder!" — Luther Heggs

If you like the feel of vintage *Andy Griffith Shows* and the spastic humor of a rail-thin Don Knotts from that whole Mayberry era, then this is the movie for you.

You may have forgotten about this one, *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken*. Released in 1966 (in some areas as a double feature with *Munster Go Home!*), it's ripe with Mayberry-isms, only this murder mystery takes place in Rachel, Kansas. Knotts is cub reporter Luther Heggs, who unwittingly solves the crime in a murder house. Murder and suicide!

Wrought with memorable, corny lines, *Ghost* is Don Knotts at his frantic best. He's so keyed up. The movie is commonly thought to have stemmed directly from a haunting *Andy Griffith* episode, although the movie's co-writer, Everett Greenbaum says, "not really."

Greenbaum, a veteran comedy writer, was long



"Moving swiftly, I found myself in the organ loft. There it was, the massive organ, shrouded in cobwebs. Its once beautiful ivory keys still covered with the stains of young Mrs. Simmons' blood."

partnered with another veteran, Jim Fritzell. These guys are among the pioneers who invented the television situation comedies — as we knew them. Together they made significant contributions to TV's *Mr. Peepers*, *The Real McCoys*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *M*A*S*H*, et al.

Greenbaum says, "We simply knew Don Knotts was greatest when he was scared."

So how did Greenbaum — who grew up in Buffalo — and his partner Fritzell — from San Francisco — so beautifully capture the small-town feel of Mayberry? Many of their film and television locales are straight out of the Midwest. *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* takes place in the sleepy town of Rachel, Kansas. The Reluctant Astronaut, another Knotts film which Greenbaum and Fritzell wrote, centered itself in Missouri.

"Jim [Fritzell] and me had an awful lot in common with Andy and Don in regards to comedy and life," he admits. "Even now when I look at Don or Andy on the screen, I feel like I'm looking in the mirror. It's a very weird feeling. Like I'm them or they're me."

"I know Andy and Don's weaknesses so well, they're both so fragile," Greenbaum explains. "Don was so funny — physically — to watch, his wiry body and motions. Hell, Don used to think he was a hunchback in high school."

Many of the film's quirkier lines — especially in the hilarious trial scene — came right from both writer's childhood. It was young Fritzell who stumbled around in shoes that were too big because they were his brother's.

"And the skeleton of the squirrel really happened to me," Greenbaum says. "Cal Oaks, this kid that I grew up with, and I climbed in this deserted attic in his neighborhood and we found a squirrel skeleton and I've never forgotten it."

And the "Run up an alley and holler fish!" line? "Oh, we used to say that when we were young."

Fritzell and Greenbaum worked on the Universal lot in a bungalow "right across the road from Cary Grant's bungalow" Greenbaum says. Fritzell usually typed while Greenbaum bounced around the room acting things out. "There were no lines that one of us wrote alone," Greenbaum adds. "It's





"Sheers in the throat!"

always a mixture."

It was while writing the screenplay for *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* that Greenbaum and Fritzell shared possibly the most excruciating bouts of laughter. And during this time, says Greenbaum, the two of them had maybe one of their most violent disagreements. "It was one of the worst fights I ever had with Jim in, oh, thirty years of writing together," he reveals.

"Jim wanted the old murder to be done with a gun. I said, 'No! A knife is what an old murder *has* to be done with!' It's much more mysterious," Greenbaum explains. "Jim couldn't understand why the sheers was better — especially when you could show them piercing a painting. I screamed at him until I won," he says, laughing.

And of course, there was a means for the crime. "We were really stopped until Ed Montagne, the producer, said, 'Well you gotta have a secret stairway.'"

According to Greenbaum the picture was made for under a million dollars. "Including studio costs, the whole thing cost about \$700,000, and we made it fast.

"But do you know what really made that movie?" Greenbaum asks in all seriousness. "The



It's creepy and it's kooky, mysterious and spooky, altogether ooky — the Mizzy melody. Composer extraordinaire Vic Mizzy today.

music."

To say that this incomparable score by Vic Mizzy merely enhanced the film would be a massive understatement. The phenomenal orchestration includes one of the most memorable, infectious, unique — yet eerie — organ solos ever composed. It was Mizzy himself who had to sit at the mighty Wurlitzer and pump out the sound. "The organist we had froze. He wasn't used to

A Few Bones to Pick With Mr. Chicken

As far as bloopers go, there just aren't a bundle of things to point at in *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken*. Here are a few little fractures, however, just to keep you on your toes.

- Watch that tapioca scene when the banker's wife, Mrs. Maxwell (portly actress Reta Shaw) daintily spoons the stuff in. One moment the dessert cup is full, in the next shot it's half empty, then full again.

- When Luther Higgs initially enters the mansion, watch his flashlight. In frantic moments, like his discovery of the organ loft, the beam of light rarely corresponds with the flashlight.

- When Luther joins Alma at her mother's home (for pounded steak), the film dissolves into a pleasant, long-shot of the Mayberryesque home at sunset. Look closely. When the film cuts to Luther about to put the moves on Alma on the porch-swing, the close-up of the front porch area does not match that long shot. Not even close.

- Don Knotts was always adept at physical comedy in his movies, and not stupid when it came to certain stunts. When Luther tumbles forward down the coal chute of the haunted mansion, notice the full head of hair on that stuntman. That mop swings around like Shemp's mane.

- Although the *Munsters* house on the Universal lot was just next door to the mansion used for the ol' Simmons place, the cameras were careful not to reveal the famed 1313 Mockingbird Lane. You can still spot both houses today on the Universal Studios Tour tram ride.

- Trivia: cut from the movie's Sunday picnic scene are shots of a big dog running up and jumping on Luther and knocking him flat on the ground. The movie's pressbook reveals that it took the tactic of the animal's trainer (one of the famous Weatherwax family) smearing ground beef in Knotts' face to provoke the dog to lick him. — S.C.

- *Running Scared* was the movie's original title, until Disney Studios called the writers and requested to utilize the title for something which was active at their studio. "So we let them. They didn't do anything with it until just a few years ago with Billy Crystal," said Everett Greenbaum.

working with pedals, too," Mizzy says.

Mizzy's orchestration blasts out from the very beginning of the film, grabs you, and sets a wonderful tone for the comedy. If ever there were a perfect marriage of action and music, this is it. The movie's music is something in between Mizzy's *Addams Family* theme and his score for *The Night Walker*, with a dash of the same genius that Henry Mancini brought to his *Pink Panther* theme.

(continued)



Knotts remembers that the "nervous speech" scene had to be repeated several times. When a fan was aimed at him, his pages of notes wouldn't fly off the podium just right.

"*The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* is a mother-lode of Mayberry humor," says Ken Beck, co-author of *The Andy Griffith Show Book* and the best-selling *Aunt Bee's Mayberry Cookbook*.

"At least a dozen actors in the movie were regulars or had small, but beloved roles on the *Andy Griffith Show*. There are so many little one-line jokes borrowed from the characters in Mayberry. Like the line where Luther says he got most of his spunk from his mother."

Ghost will always remain a virtual cornucopia of character actors — a casting dream with such greats as Reta Shaw, Burt Mustin, Phil Ober, Charles Lane, Ellen Corby, Sandra Gould, Hal Smith, Hope Sommers, Lurene Tuttle, Eddie Quillan, and a pre-Darrin Dick Sargent.

The Ghost and Mr. Chicken is now available on VHS, although the pinched picture sometimes brutally defaces the characters. The laser disc edition in letterbox format finally reveals for the home viewer, the full image, the way it was meant to be seen.

(Special thanks to Kevin Marhanka for research assistance on this article.)

Steve Cox is a free lance writer and author of 10 books on film and television. His book *The Munchkins of Oz* will be released this fall from Cumberland House Publishers (Nashville). He has just completed *Dreaming of Jeannie: TV's Prime Time in a Bottle for an early 1997 release by St. Martin's Press*. Needless to say, he works with words because words are his work. ■

Tying Up Knotts

In between rehearsals and performances in the theatre productions around the country, Don Knotts is usually preparing for a Mayberry personal appearance or a guest-spot on television. He's a busy guy, but *Cult Movies* was able to have Sarah patch us through to interrupt his schedule and snag a little of his time on the telephone recently. Now sounding a level close to his toppling pitch on TV, he was on the horn to specifically talk *Chicken*.

Cult Movies: Did you leave the *Andy Griffith* show to do movies?

Don Knotts: What really started it was that Andy was gonna go five years. From the very beginning, right from the get-go. That's all he was gonna do, he said. And I had a five year contract, so in the middle of the fifth year he hadn't changed his mind and naturally I started looking around for other things. Lew Wasserman brought me over to Universal and offered me pictures. So then Andy, at the last minute, changes his mind and said he wanted to stay on.

I was just a little too far into the contract with Wasserman to change my mind.

CM: Do you regret not staying with Andy?

DK: No, not at all, because I had done five years and we'd been very successful. If the pictures hadn't been successful I might have been sorry.

CM: Does *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* hold any passion with you?

DK: It sticks out because it was the first picture I did at Universal. I had a contract for five years and during the five years I made five pictures. I think it was one the best.

CM: What's the story about you developing a



serious blood clot caused by filming the scenes where you kept running up and down the staircase?

DK: That's a little wrong. I hurt my leg, I think I pulled a muscle or something. But about a year later I got a blood clot, but it wasn't related to that. It was a minor thing.

It's a wonder any of us lived through the movie. We had a tight schedule on that thing. We shot that in seventeen days. We were crazy to even try to do the movie in seventeen days, but we did. Of course, we were working twelve hour days, but even so, Alan Rafkin knew how to move a production along. Alan directed a lot of the *Andy Griffith* shows which is why I got him over there. He's very fast and we knew we were gonna have to

work fast.

CM: Did Andy Griffith visit you on the set?

DK: As a matter of fact, the first wash treatment that we came up with for *Ghost* wasn't very good. We had a big meeting. A new producer came in, Ed Montagne. I asked Universal if they'd pay Andy Griffith to sit in 'cause Andy's a very good story constructionist. We sat with Everett Greenbaum and Jim Fritzell and Andy and myself sort of reblocked the storyline. We spent about two weeks at that.

CM: How did the line "Attaboy Luther!" come about?

DK: Everett [Greenbaum] had already written in "Attaboy Luther" in that speech scene and he's the one who yells it in the picture. It was Andy who said "Why not have that guy as a running gag?"

After we screened the picture, somebody at Universal confronted us and said "We think you should show the fellow who's been saying 'Attaboy Luther' at the end of the movie."

I said, "Are you kidding?" I really got mad. That was the dumbest suggestion I ever heard.

CM: Did you like how the whole picture turned out?

DK: Oh yeah. I loved how it came out. I think the stuff in the haunted house was really fun to shoot and it looked great. And of course, Vic Mizzy's music is great. I've always enjoyed his work.

For a long time I wondered why they didn't release some of the movies on video and I found out recently when I was at Universal, that they didn't have legal clearance. And they still haven't on one picture, I think, *How To Frame A Figg*.

Interview conducted by Steve Cox

UNKNOWN VIDEO

TEASECAKE:

The American Stag Reel If you're curious at all about those naughty little reels they never showed in theatres, this is the tape to see. Lots of rare footage, all of it direct from 16mm prints, and many of those were originals! The result is a tape with far greater picture quality than we usually see! We get a little of everything here: dancers, a beach-loving cutie at the seashore, a few rare peek-a-boo nudie shorts from around 1937 (can you name that old character actor who shows up in those?), a wild 1939 visit with three playful lesbians (careful with that cigarette, miss!) and more! With a soundtrack of vintage jazz and pop tunes.

Flaming Flappers Here's a new collection of more explicit stags, concentrating on films of the roaring 'Twenties (with a few more from the 1930's)! Included is the earliest known such film, the notorious *A Free Ride*, and lots of others: an encounter between a young lady and a friendly magician, an episode between a starlet and a casting director, and plenty more! We have lots of those reels, but for this tape we used only our best-looking prints. This is the real thing, folks, so you must be 21 to order!

Naked Movie Stars! Excellent video transfers of your favorite actresses in their most memorable scenes. Take a peek at Melanie Griffith, Jodie Foster, Uma Thurman, Linda Blair, Sherilyn Fenn, Elvira, Phoebe Cates, Denise Crosby, Teri Hatcher, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kim Basinger, Traci Lords, Bridget Fonda, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and lots more! Watch for the sequel later this year!

Stag Reels: 1950s Here's a collection of stags from the fabulous fifties. Some are the semi-legit nude model reels intended for art students, some of them are home-made candids of the girl next door, some show strippers of the day, and some are downright strange, but they're all fun to watch! This one would also be rated a hard "R." With musical score!



MIDNIGHT MOVIES:

Assassin of Youth (1936) Other than *Reefer Madness*, this is the most famous 1930s exploitation movie. The innocent kids of Depressionville USA fall victim to underworld drug pushers, and it's not long before the kids are hardened marijuana addicts. Wild parties, giggling fits, and the inevitable misery and wasted lives follow. But it's a lot of fun along the way! Unintentionally one of the funniest films of the era. From a gorgeous old original print!

The Devil Bat (1940) A real treat for Bela Lugosi fans! Bela stars in this fun little picture as a mad scientist raising huge bloodthirsty vampire bats, and sending them out to kill everyone he knows! Meanwhile people think he's just developing a new aftershave lotion, not realizing that the lotion is how the bats zero in on their victims! One more example of why we're all film buffs!

Ghosts On the Loose (1943) Probably the weirdest East Side Kids movie ever made, this one pits Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall against a ring of Nazi spies headed by Bela Lugosi! The title's completely misleading, too, although for some reason the script has some of the action taking place in a haunted house (maybe they just had a lot of leftover props from *Spooks Run Wild*). Look for Ava Gardner as the love interest and Sunshine Sammy Morrison among the Kids.

The Ghoul (1933) Boris Karloff stars as a demented Egyptologist obsessed with the powers of the ancient Egyptian gods. On his deathbed he orders his servant to attach a sacred jewel to his hand, warning that he'll rise from the dead to seek revenge if the jewel is stolen. Guess what happens next? Karloff gives an excellent, intense performance in this landmark example of 30's horror.

The Most Dangerous Game (1932) A must-see for all fans of *King Kong*! This RKO production was made by Merian Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack just prior to *Kong*, and features some of the same cast members, including Fay Wray! There's even a Max Steiner score and the same lush tropical island settings for this rousing adventure of a rich madman living on his own island who loves to hunt humans. Great pre-Code thriller, seen here in a transfer from a beautiful print!

Mr. Wong, Detective (1938) The Mr. Wong series has long been overlooked by film buffs. When they were made, the new Sherlock Holmes series with Basil Rathbone attracted all the attention, and the Charlie Chan series had already been established, leaving Mr. Wong out in the cold. The films deserve rediscovery today, and this is the first and the best in the series. Boris Karloff stars as the detective, confronted with a poison-gas mystery. Silent star Evelyn Brent is featured too.



Svengali (1931) John Barrymore broke away from romantic roles to play the crazed hypnotist Svengali in this classic film, easily the best version of the famous story. Expressionistic sets, moody photography, some impressive special effects work and Barrymore's own spellbinding performance make this a must-see. A renowned film that's fun enough to watch over and over! From our new print.

Things to Come (1936) The famous early science fiction classic, starring Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Ralph Richardson, looking toward a violent, fascist future. An eerie premonition of the Nazi conquests that hadn't yet happened when the film was made.

Tombs of the Blind Dead (1971) The cult favorite that spawned three sequels! The *Blind Dead* films have a huge following in Europe, but the U.S. hasn't caught up yet. Hooded, cloaked cadavers rise from their graves in search of victims... and they're blind, so as long as you stay very quiet, you might survive! Great-looking zombie creatures and a shocker ending. Uncut and letterboxed!

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DeMille's Hollywood

Special Article by Katherine Orrison



Katherine Orrison with *Ten Commandments* location photographer Ken Whitmore.

*This month will see the publication of Katherine Orrison's long-awaited book on Cecil B. De Mille's classic, **The Ten Commandments**. In this exclusive article, Ms. Orrison relates an insightful first-person sidelight, followed by the premiere unveiling of material from her amazing new book, printed for **Cult Movies** readers for the first time anywhere!*

My first trip to Laughlin Park was in 1982, when I was working with De Mille leading man and Producer Henry Wilcoxon. At his suggestion I was to drive over to pick up a *Ten Commandments* residual check rather than wait for it to be mailed.

"I've spoken to Helen Cohen at the office," he explained, "and she's expecting you up at the house."

Simple enough, I thought. But I was wrong. From the moment I walked across the lawn time stood still. That house was a monument the way Dickens house in London is, or Rodin's in Paris. It crowned a hill overlooking Los Angeles to the South-East and Hollywood to the West. The trees and gardens surrounding the house were carefully tended and alive with birds. The sound of heavy traffic on Los Feliz Boulevard receded as I reached the top of the hill and De Mille's front door.

"Come on in," Helen Cohen chirped as I knocked on the screen door. "I'm sure you'd like to see the office," she continued. "Take a left, it's at the end of the hall."

De Mille had bought the house that he used as an office from Charlie Chaplin three years after buying the house "next door" in 1916 for approximately \$28,000. After joining the two houses with a long covered walkway they were referred to as "2000" (the family home) and "2010" (the office and guest house).

De Mille worked at home (in an office set up in

the 2010 living room) every day before going to the studio for lunch. 2010 was for me a treasure-trove of Hollywood history. Books, props, paintings, tapestries and furniture that had been used in 40 years of De Mille's films filled almost every space of the immense room.

I entered quietly and looked around. De Mille's Gothic desk stood in the curve of a large bay window to the left of a carved stone fireplace permanently obscured by a movie screen. A life-size portrait of Victor Mature as Samson dominated one wall. The research library shelves sagged from the weight of oversized volumes devoted to Dore engravings, biblical history and early American lore. Honors and awards, scrolls and plaques cluttered the opposite wall in a perfusion of color and shapes. The dark-stained hardwood floors were layered with oriental rugs Mr. and Mrs. De Mille had brought back from their travels.

There was a fresh flower from the garden in a vase on the desk. Sunlight streamed through the window onto De Mille's high-backed wing chair. I reached out to touch it and was amazed at how cold the chair felt. I touched the cushion, the floor, the front desk drawer. All icy.

There was no doubt about it: his presence was almost palatable. Helen Cohen stood in the doorway watching me.

"There's a cold spot in the family house as well," she said after I'd commented on my observations. "Ask Henry if he feels anything. I was never here when De Mille was alive so I've nothing to compare it to."

I couldn't wait to get home. But as a test I decided not to be the one to mention it first. I should have known I'd be wasting my time!

"Did you go into the office?" was the first thing out of his mouth as I opened the door.

"Un-Huh."

"Did you sit in his chair?"



Producer/director Cecil B. DeMille with Mr. and Mrs. Charlton Heston and child.

"Never! That would be blasphemy. I would never sit in his lap!"

"So you feel it too," he said with quiet satisfaction.

Not just me; I imagine anyone who ever came to visit would feel it.

That was my first visit to the De Mille house, and the deep emotions about that visit remain strongly felt to this day. Sometime later I paid another kind of visit.

"No one knows who Cecil B. De Mille was these days," the smiling, blond, Real Estate-nik explained. "When I sold that house I sold it as the Chaplin House. My clients at least knew who Charlie Chaplin was."

I stood at the entrance to De Mille Drive biting my tongue; my friend Sue staring at me anxiously. She knew I considered it blasphemy that De Mille's estate was sold to overseas investors at all, but to have sold it as Chaplin's house was too much.

"Have you seen the inside?" the Real Estate witch asked. "Design-House 1989," you know, and they redid everything.

Oh, joy. De Mille's office too? "Oh, yes. Everything. It needed it!" she assured us. "Go right on in."

As my intrepid little group began to hike up the hill I couldn't help remembering the times before this sale that I'd driven up to De Mille's office on various errands and visits. Unlike this particular morning, it had always been something special. Unlike this morning, everyone with business at 2010 De Mille Drive knew that they were entering the house De Mille lived in, worked in, and died in — with the De Mille Estate headquartered there for an additional 30 years afterwards.

"Welcome to the Samson and Delilah Powder Room," the interior decorator guide was gushing. "Note the color scheme is based on the colors of a



"Next you go upstairs to the Charlton Heston Closet and the Yul Brynner Bedroom!" Our tour group was ushered speechlessly through a walk-in closet with Moses' levite robe and sandals hanging on a hanger, then on to the "Charlton Heston Bathroom" complete with towels monogrammed "C. H." Astounded, I thought to myself, "If I was Heston I'd sue."



Yvonne DeCarlo and Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments*.

peacock's tail, just like the ones used in Hedy Lamarr's dress."

I winced at the almost purple walls combined with a turquoise toilet and green bath towels monogrammed "C. B." My friend Sue looked like she'd faint.

"Right this way to the stunning dining room!"

Helen Cohen (and before her Florence Cole's and Bernie Mosk's) sun room office had been made into a dining room with all its windows sealed off and the walls covered with flowered wallpaper with a black background.

"The dramatic black walls provide a frame for the imported Italian Chandelier" the decorator explained, "Sealing off the windows makes it cozy and private..."

"Next you go upstairs to the Charlton Heston Closet and the Yul Brynner Bedroom!" Our tour group was ushered speechlessly through a walk-in closet with Moses' levite robe and sandals hanging on a hanger, then on to the "Charlton Heston Bathroom" complete with towels monogrammed "C. H." Astounded, I thought to myself, "If I was Heston I'd sue."

It got worse. The "Yul Brynner Bedroom" was a mixture of blue and gold paint and Zebra and Leopard print furniture. I'm sure Mr. Brynner was spinning in his grave. Previously this had been a quiet, good-taste bedroom furnished with 1920s style furniture.

"And now you're all in for a treat; the last room on our tour is Charlie Chaplin's living room!"

With mixtures of dread and apprehension we descended the stairs into De Mille's former office. The Gothic-beamed ceiling had fleur-de-lies painted on it. A statue of Charlie Chaplin sat on a bench outside the windows and all trace of De Mille's 70 years of inhabitation had vanished.

"It's hot in here," a woman on our tour complained. "Can you open a window?" Without hesitation, the living room guide crossed to the bay window and opened it wide. A gust of Santa Ana wind blew through the room. The desk, the books, the painting of Samson, the awards, the camera that shot *The Squawman*, were all gone. Instead, reproduction antiques were arranged in their place.

"Isn't this a perfectly-done room?" a woman beside me asked. "I wish I had the money to buy

this house with all these lovely items in it!"

"Here's a price list for this room," the interior decorator said, handing all of us a copy. I stared at it in horror before crumpling it up. I could stand no more. I turned and bolted out of the room and sat next to the statue of Charlie Chaplin on the "Charlie Chaplin Bench" in the garden until the tour was over. Sue rejoined me for the trek down the hill.

"At least it hasn't been torn down like Pickfair," Sue comforted me as we drove away, "or The Garden of Allah, or The Errol Flynn Estate, or the Garden Court Apartments."

"Only because the new owners have been stopped in their subdividing plans by the zoning laws." I answered glumly. For those lucky people living elsewhere in the country, tear-downs were the money-grubbing rage here in the 1980s, much to Los Angeles' detriment.

We stopped and stared up at De Mille's house lit up with garish orange security lights and a satellite dish on the roof.

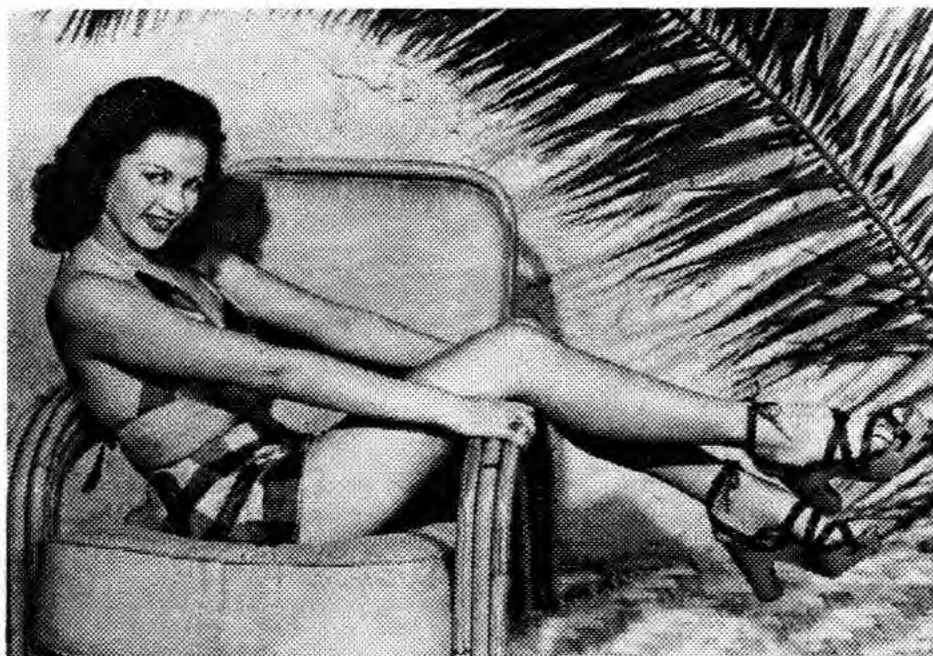
"It's hard to explain, but he was there — still there — and you could feel the past, feel what Hollywood was," I thought to myself.

And it was there and then that I decided to write a book about De Mille and the Hollywood that still lives on in one special place: the movies. And above all of Cecil B. De Mille's movies, he lives, breathes and speaks with the most passion in his 1956 masterpiece: *The Ten Commandments*.

The following is an excerpt from *Written In Stone*, published by Vestal Press of New York on the 40th Anniversary of *The Ten Commandments* release. Through the years I conducted almost 50 interviews with scores of *The Ten Commandments* production staff, crew and actors. The brilliant, enigmatic producer/director was revealed in all his complexities; the art of his movie-making was explained; and the reasons for *The Ten Commandments* extraordinary longevity were made clear.

The Ten Commandments, made at the very end of Hollywood's Golden Age, remains Hollywood's best monument to its creator, its past, and the world the movies created which was life not as it was, but as it should have been.

(continued)



Mrs. Moses: Yvonne DeCarlo

In the spring of 1984 I found Henry Wilcoxon's address book and set down to write notes and make calls to as many of his friends as I could locate. As I was still in the middle of writing Wilcoxon's biography, speaking and reminiscing with his co-stars and great and good friends was of immeasurable help in understanding the complexities of his personality as well as assuring that I would write "in his voice."

Aside from Henry's ex-wife, Joan, the most gracious and loving of the women in his life was co-star and friend, Yvonne DeCarlo.

As good and as beautiful on the inside as she is outside, Yvonne is warm, delightfully humorous, and combines an actress's emotions with a mother's concerns and thoughtfulness. It's always seemed incongruous to me to think of one of Hollywood's sexiest and most glamorous stars as Motherly. Those beautiful hands doing dishes? Those dancer's legs pushing a vacuum cleaner? But Yvonne DeCarlo is a down-to-earth individual, and, that glamorous facade to the contrary, has worked hard for both her career and her family all her life.

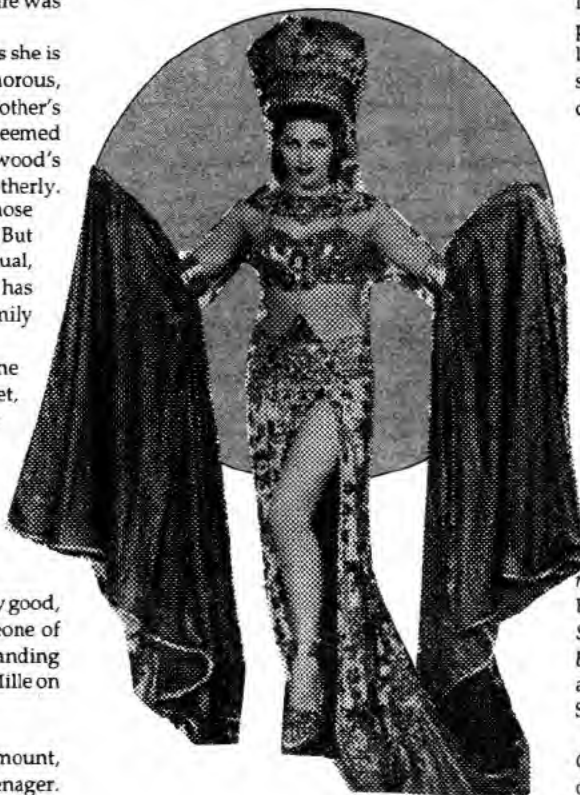
It's always unexpected to pick up the phone and her, "Hello, it's Yvonne," said in a quiet, musical voice. Our conversations over the years began in '84, when I asked her if there was any memento she would appreciate from the house. Without any hesitation she remembered a book on Roman history that her son had enjoyed sharing with Henry. Her memory about everything else is equally good, and I have always been thrilled that someone of Yvonne DeCarlo's integrity and understanding was there working with Wilcoxon and DeMille on *The Ten Commandments*.

...

My first movie contract was with Paramount, not Universal Studios, when I was still a teenager. I didn't get a chance to do much—I think I was on hand to keep Dorothy Lamour "in line" so to

speak. The studios did that a lot: Kim Novak was Rita Hayworth's "replacement" at Columbia; Ida Lupino was "held over" Bette Davis's head for as long as Warner Bros. could manage it. Anyway, I wound up doing a lot of extra bits: "third girl on the left," that sort of thing. You have to know where to look for me in *Road to Morocco*, *Rainbow Island*, and *For Whom The Bell Tolls*.

Being a Paramount starlet meant seeing Cecil B.



DeMille on the lot every day. And I knew, even though I was a green kid, that DeMille was a star-maker. He almost did it for me in 1943 when he was casting *The Story of Dr. Wassell*, his third collaboration with Gary Cooper. Well, Gary Cooper had singled me out for a smile and a tweak on the chin in *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, so maybe I had a chance to be singled out from all the other little starlets running around Paramount on *Dr. Wassell*. Iscreen tested for the role of "Tremartini" and was called into DeMille's office for an interview. I knew a few of my actress competitors for the role, but I didn't know it was my competitor's shoulders I was up against until DeMille told me. DeMille took a long time to make up his mind, and when he did, I wasn't Tremartini, I was "the third native girl on the left."

I was upset about it, but I didn't let on to DeMille—ever. If you wanted to work with him again—and I did—you had to stay on good terms with him. I just smiled and played the native girl in a sarong with too-skinny shoulders, and I just nodded when DeMille promised he'd make it up to me on another picture "in the future"—not that I believed him.

No one is successful on hard work alone in show business. It's also luck, and I was lucky when Paramount director Billy Wilder recommended me to agent Paul Kohner. And I was lucky that Paul Kohner's agency took me on when Paramount didn't pick up my option. And that's how I ended up in the right place at the right time at Universal Studios. *Salome, Where She Danced* gave me the chance and material to succeed in my first starring role. Yes, I was lucky. And I worked hard.

My second Universal movie was called *Frontier Gal*. I remember Peter Coe was in that one with me and Rod Cameron. And Peter Coe wasn't lucky. A lot of people didn't know he had health problems. You didn't know that, did you? The location was at an altitude of 8,000, and he couldn't seem to catch his breath. They had to rush him down the mountain to a hospital, and it was discovered that he had a weak heart and he was all through with any kind of high-altitude work. Peter just wasn't lucky.

No, I didn't know that in 1948, DeMille was considering me for the part of Delilah in *Samson and Delilah*. What did he say? [Author's note: I had DeMille's personal casting journals and looked Yvonne DeCarlo up.]

May 3, 1948: Screened *Casbah*

May 15, 1948: Screened *Black Bart*

CBDM Comment: Doesn't have the right personality to play Delilah.

Well, that's a compliment when you think about it! I did not know he was really thinking about me for any other picture.

What I do know was that Henry Wilcoxon was thinking of me for *The Ten Commandments*. I know he recommended Nina Foch for Bithia because he'd worked with her on *Scaramouch*, and Nina and I were both in *Sombrero*, so when Henry ran a reel of *Sombrero* to look at Foch, he saw me and recommended me to play Sephora.

Well, before I came in and signed on for *The Ten Commandments*, I interviewed with DeMille without my agent. He just didn't like agents. And I think it was because he could get an actor for much less money that way. After that "office directing"



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Henry always talked about — he didn't even actually let me hold the script, he told me about my role and he read my lines to me! — he dangled the role in front of me. A major role with only a twenty-five-thousand dollar price-tag attached. Imagine only twenty-five thousand. My agent would have marched me right out of there.

But, ever since my first contract with Paramount, I'd promised myself to work with Cecil B.

DeMille. So I took the part even though it was a big cut in pay for me by that time.

I went to Germany to make a movie called *Magic Fire* for Republic on September 23, 1954. On September 9, before I left Los Angeles, I left a message with the DeMille office that "I may pop down to Cairo while Mr. DeMille is there." In Europe, I thought about and decided it was the smart thing to do. As soon as *Magic Fire* was

wrapped, in early December, I flew down, accompanied by my first cousin, Ken.

DeMille was at a location called Abu Rudeis, preparing to shoot the parting of the Red Sea through a dry river bed. I was chauffeured up the hillside in a Jeep with a police captain escort from Cairo named Salah Sayed Ahmed. I knew how to make an entrance! I brought a present for DeMille that I'd picked up in Munich, and he seemed pleasantly surprised by that and impressed I'd really made the trip. It's a good thing I did, I saw a lot and I learned a lot. And I was on hand when Henry Wilcoxon quit.

You didn't know about that, huh? He and DeMille had a big fight, and Henry went back to Cairo, checked out of the Mena House Hotel, and was at the airport going through customs when production manager Don Robb, I think it was, caught up with him and persuaded him to stay. Years and years later, in 1978, after both of us were divorced [Wilcoxon divorced wife Joan Woodbury in 1969, and Yvonne DeCarlo divorced husband Bob Morgan in 1974], Henry and I dated for a time, and I found out about him making the mistake of a lifetime. He said he had a fight with DeMille in 1935 and they didn't speak again for nearly 10 years. I knew DeMille could be upsetting, but as young as I was in 1943, I kept the upset about Dr. Wassell to myself, staying friends with DeMille. He could yell at women, too. Not ever me, you understand, but I saw him yell at Dorothy Jenkins at the Red Sea.

Before I left Egypt, Henry Wilcoxon, Chuck Heston and I did a special RKO photo shoot through and around Cairo. It was good Paramount publicity for *The Ten Commandments* and tie-in publicity for my RKO movie, *Passion*, which was opening in Cairo while I was there. Back here in California, Paramount also made arrangements for me to take weaving lessons at UCLA, sheepherding lessons in the Valley, and I even learned how to take a chariot out for a spin. It's all hard work, but I learned it all. I had to act, shepherd, talk in Biblical dialect, and (one time) weave all at the same time. Everything had to be authentic for this movie. DeMille wanted everything perfect. And when it wasn't perfect is when the production staff or someone on the crew got belittled. Henry was sensitive, you know? He let things get to him. He took a lot.

We shot the spring and summer of 1955, and I met my future husband, stuntman Bob Morgan, on the set of *Ten Commandments*. I'd made his acquaintance before, on earlier movies, but when he became a widower, re-meeting him seemed fortuitous. We married in November of 1955. My son Bruce and *The Ten Commandments* both premiered in the latter part of 1956. DeMille was so delighted that he had something to do with it that he offered to become our son's godfather.

Mr. DeMille cast me as the French girl in *The Buccaneer* in 1957, but *The Buccaneer's* shooting schedule coincided with my pregnancy with a second son, Michael. Godfather DeMille well understood my priorities, and we parted professionally, still friends. *The Ten Commandments* did everything for me that I could have wanted: it was a good career boost, it let to a family with two sons, and it is a movie my great grandchildren will see — just as Cecil B. DeMille promised me when I signed for the part of Sephora on September 8, 1954. ■

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BELA LUGOSI

THE APE MAN

Revisited

by Buddy Barnett

Bela Lugosi starred in nine low budget horror films for producer Sam Katzman and released by Monogram pictures in the early 1940s. The nine films: *Invisible Ghost* (1941), *Spooks Run Wild* (1941), *Black Dragons* (1942), *The Corpse Vanishes* (1942), *Bowery At Midnight* (1942), *The Ape Man* (1943), *Ghosts On The Loose* (1943), *Voodoo Man* (1944) and *Return Of The Ape Man* (1944), have a cult following that seems to be at its strongest over 50 years after the last one, *Voodoo Man*, was filmed in October 1943.

Often ridiculed over the years because of the miniscule budgets and way out plots and the sometimes surreal atmosphere, Sam Katzman's Lugosi films were never meant to be taken completely seriously. In fact, in an interview at the time Katzman referred to the films as 'moron' movies. They were basically exploitation films with the exploitable commodity being Bela Lugosi himself.

"Sell Bela Lugosi Big! Don't overlook the fact that Bela Lugosi is one of the screen's two greatest box office draws in the thrill and chill field (the other being Boris Karloff)... Moviegoers know they'll get their money's worth in shocks and shrieks when Mr. Lugosi stalks the shadows... he's a natural, so sell him heavily in your ads, lobby and marquee..."

—*Invisible Ghost* pressbook, 1941.

The films were written specifically for Lugosi (as a matter of fact, in the *Spooks Run Wild* script his character is just called Lugosi throughout the script) and designed to be taken seriously only by the kids and the more impressionable adults. Meanwhile, most viewers could enjoy the pictures as a comic burlesque of horror films. Monogram screenwriter Gerald Schnitzer commented in the *Bowery At Midnight* pressbook that the things that frightened people in years past were now more likely to make them laugh.

As Mike Copner pointed out in our *Bela Lugosi Then and Now* issue, the Lugosi Monograms are sort of like the pulp novels of the screen. Just as the pulps are a succession of lurid events tacked together to create a story, the Lugosi Monograms are stitched together in much the same way and if you can accept the inferior production values and somewhat sordid atmosphere you can sit back and marvel at the miracles that Lugosi could perform working with the most meagre backup.

"...you will actually begin to enjoy the cheapness a bit, and develop a new appreciation of what Bela was able to do with absolutely nothing to go on. If this were Michelangelo, forced to create something with a single crayon on a sheet of cardboard; or Paderewski, having to perform on a baby's toy piano, you'd give them the same consideration, wouldn't you? Take this attitude the



next time you watch *The Corpse Vanishes* and you will be amazingly rewarded."

—Michael Copner from "Man Of Mystery" *Bela Lugosi Then And Now*, 1990.

At a time when Universal Pictures was just using Lugosi's name for exploitation purposes and casting him in minor roles like the butler in *Night Monster* and a guy who looks in windows in the 1941 *The Black Cat*, Katzman at Monogram knew that the attraction was Lugosi himself and so he offered plenty of Lugosi to the moviegoers. He just neglected to offer other things like a good script and decent production values.

One thing that the Monogram series did have going for it was that each one offered Lugosi in different and sometimes surprisingly challenging roles. He played a killer with a split personality in *Invisible Ghost*; a pseudo vampire in *Spooks Run Wild*; a renegade Nazi anti-hero in *Black Dragons*; a henpecked mad scientist in *The Corpse Vanishes*; a ruthless master criminal/gangster in *Bowery At Midnight*; an ape man in *The Ape Man*; a Nazi spy in *Ghosts On The Loose*; a voodoo master in *Voodoo Man*; and a classic mad scientist in *Return Of The Ape Man*.

Even though the production values on Lugosi's Monogram films were skimpy, producer Katzman



did always hire veteran movie directors like Wallace Fox and William Beaudine. These were professionals and could get the job done on time and on budget. And Katzman always cast his films with veteran movie actors. He knew that he needed pros who could do the job with a minimum of retakes.

In the Lugosi series you can see talented people like, Wallace Ford, Clarence Muse, Dave O'Brien, George Zucco, Louise Currie, Betty Compson, Jack Mulhall, J. Farrell MacDonald, John Carradine, Minerva Urecal, Sunshine Sammy Morrison, Angelo Rossitto, Snub Pollard, Wheeler Oakman, Vince Barnett, Frank Moran, Huntz Hall, Leo Gorcey and many more.

Katzman also had an eye for the ladies; he used many beautiful actresses in his films. Beauty contest winner Wanda McKay, Luana Walters, Joan Barclay, Judith Gibson (later known as Teala Loring), Louise Currie (whom Katzman referred to as the 'Katherine Hepburn' of Monogram because of her acting talent), Polly Ann Young (sister of Loretta Young), and he even had Ava Gardner in one of her earliest film appearances.

Many film critics over the years have stated that appearing in Monogram's poor pictures ruined Bela Lugosi's career. I don't believe that this is true. The movies were poverty row, but Lugosi had appeared in poverty row films from the beginning of his stardom as did his rival Boris Karloff. Lugosi was basically a "B" movie star who occasionally was featured in some "A" product.

What more or less ended Lugosi's movie career was the end of World War II when the post-war crowd lost its taste for the escapist movie fare that Lugosi specialized in. He filmed *Gentius At Work* for RKO Pictures in August 1945, the same month that the war ended in Japan. It was also the end of the most prolific acting period of Lugosi's life, 1939 to 1945. So, the Monograms really had nothing to do with it; they weren't that bad.

In comparison with the Universal horror pictures being made at the same time, the Lugosi Monograms do usually come up short, but a few of the Lugosi's don't come off too badly next to Universal's bigger budgeted items. *The Corpse Vanishes* and *Voodoo Man* are as good as many of Universal's "B" films and many movie buffs consider *Invisible Ghost's* direction and camera work to be superior to much of Universal's "B" movie stuff. *Bowery At Midnight*, with its delightful

Ape Man Stars Lugosi.

Playing both ends against the middle is Director William Beaudine in building up *The Ape Man*. Chill chasers will get a tremendous thrill out of the picture, while the more detached will obtain laughs out of the slyly satirical moments, which reach their climax in the last moment.

Transformation

More sinned against than sinning is the unusual position in which Bela Lugosi finds himself at the beginning of the film, when, having volunteered for one of those vague movie scientific experiments, he becomes a horrible creature, half ape, half man. But he soon gets into his stride and kills any number of persons, or has an ape do it for him, in order to get spinal fluid to turn him back into a man.

As if this were not enough terror, for good

measure is added an old gal who collects spirits of the dead, the weirder the better, and who records their groans and yips on a phonograph. Minerva Urecal plays this role to the liking of the most avid horror hound. Someday, indeed, somebody will write a spine-tickler especially for Minerva and she will be right there with the goods.

Where are Servants?

There are some incongruities, of course. Why does Bela have an accent, and not his sister? Where are the servants when all the quaky monkeyshines are going on in the big house?

On the sunnier side are the delightful Wallace Ford as another tough newspaperman and Louise Currie as wise-cracking news photographer. Emil Van Horn plays the ape in creepy fashion. J. Farrell MacDonald roars again as a police captain and the others all are competent in their roles.

—Los Angeles Times, 2/20/43.



skidrow atmosphere (a Monogram specialty), an ambitious script and Lugosi in one his best roles is as good as any '40s Universal horror film.

Which brings us to *The Ape Man*, undeniably the most famous and probably the most popular

film in the Monogram series, however, a film that to most people does not compare favorably to the Universal pictures of the period. As a matter of fact, many people consider it to be Lugosi's worst

(continued)



in common with Universal's *Wolfman* was the similarity in titles, the plot point that had Lugosi turning into an *Ape Man* and Chaney turning into a *Wolfman* (the first by scientific means and the other by supernatural curse), and the fact that Lugosi was in both movies (his part in *The Wolfman* was very small).

The plot of *The Ape Man* is a simple one: Lugosi, a scientist, for reasons never explained turns himself into a half man, half ape and with the help of his pet gorilla and his loony sister, he commits several murders to obtain spinal fluid, which he hopes will cure his condition. A pair of nosy reporters foil his plans.

The Ape Man was released on 3/19/43 and first played in Hollywood at the Colony Theatre at 6523 Hollywood Blvd. *The Ape Man* ran for two weeks from March 19 to April 2, 1943 on a double bill with *Kid Dynamite*, an East Side Kids comedy. RKO's *The Cat People* was in its 13th week down the street, *The Boogie Man Will Get You*, another burlesque horror film starring Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre opened in Hollywood near the end of *The Ape Man*'s run. *The Ape Man* played in New York at the same time at the New York Theatre on a double bill with *Dead Man's Gulch*.

It has been reported that nearly all reviews at the time crucified the picture, but this is not true. The reviews were actually pretty well mixed. *The New York Daily News* and *Variety* crucified it unmercifully. *Motion Picture Herald* thought that it was a let down as did many of the other reviewers. *The Los Angeles Times*, *Daily Variety* and even *Photoplay* actually liked *The Ape Man* and gave it fairly high marks.

Critics nowadays either love it or hate it and it has a well deserved reputation as a cult movie favorite.

The Ape Man was well directed by William Beaudine. He does a lot of crosscutting and moves the camera quite a bit during the movie and doesn't depend too much on long static takes. Care was taken with the shot composition and Lugosi was photographed throughout with care.

The screenplay by Barney Sarecky is insane, but at least seems to be intentionally so and there is some fun dialogue for the connoisseur to savor. The relationship between Lugosi and his sister is surprisingly believable for your usually illogical Monogram movie universe and the relationship between reporter Wallace Ford and photographer Louise Currie is crudely reminiscent of screwball

movie and some even consider it to be the worst movie of all time.

The Ape Man is far from being the worst movie ever made, even calling it a bad movie is a stretching of the truth. In some ways it is even a good film. In spite of the many critics who call it a demeaning role, Lugosi's part in *The Ape Man* is actually an interesting one and Lugosi plays it to the hilt.

The Ape Man was the sixth film in Lugosi's Monogram series. Lugosi started work on *The Ape Man* directly after finishing his role as the monster in *Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman*. Principal photography began on 12/16/42 and according to the trades, the production of *The Ape Man* took 15 days.

The original title had been *The Gorilla Strikes*, but by the time production started this had been changed to *The Ape Man*. The screenplay was written by associate producer Barney Sarecky and was based on a story called "They Creep In The Dark" by Karl Brown. The Director was 'B' movie veteran William Beaudine.

Lugosi's costars were the beautiful Louise Currie (*Voodoo Man*, *You'll Find Out*, both with Lugosi, *Adventures of Captain Marvel*, *The Masked Marvel*), classic character actor Wallace Ford (*Freaks*, *Mysterious Mr. Wong*, *Night of Terror*, both with Lugosi), Minerva Urecal (*The Corpse Vanishes*), Henry Hall (*Voodoo Man*) and gorilla impersonator Emil Van Horn (*Perils of Nyoka*).

Monogram's inspiration for *The Ape Man* had been the huge success of Universal's *The Wolfman* of the year before. Monogram was a late comer to the *Wolfman* rip-off sweepstakes, P.R.C. had already released *The Mad Monster* with Glenn Strange as a wolfman, 20th Century-Fox had *The Undying Monster*, a werewolf story, and RKO had *The Cat People*, an even bigger hit than *The Wolfman* and which led to a whole series of Val Lewton produced horror movies. Later Columbia Pictures would jump on the bandwagon with *Return of The Vampire* (featuring a werewolf character) and much later Republic would present *The Catman of Paris*.

The only thing that Monogram's *Ape Man* had





comedies of the period.

The acting was, generally, quite good. Wallace Ford and Louise Currie are like an alternate universe version of Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn. Their experienced playing really lifts the film. Henry Hall, as Lugosi's colleague is sincere but bland and Emil Van Horn as Lugosi's gorilla sidekick with his above average gorilla suit (the face had the most personality of any gorilla in movies at the time) adds some of the 'funnest' moments in the film with his performance.

Minerval Urecal, as Lugosi's devoted sister who happens to collect ghosts as a hobby, gives the most memorable performance besides Lugosi's in the movie. Her role is both weirdly comical and

surprisingly touching. *The Los Angeles Times* was so impressed by her that they suggested that she star in her own horror movie. Other movie veterans like J. Farrell MacDonald, Wheeler Oakman, Jack Mulhall and Sunshine Sammy Morrison don't have much to do but it's good to see them anyway.

Which brings us to Lugosi; *The Ape Man* is far from his best role but it is not as degrading as some people claim. In fact, some Lugosi fans can't even bear to watch the movie because they feel that it was so humiliating to Lugosi. But that is bullshit, the man was a professional actor and actors act no matter what the circumstances and Lugosi plays *The Ape Man* to the hilt. He plays it like it was an Academy Award winning role and he gives it everything he's got.

His performance is full of memorable little moments: Lugosi throwing a temper tantrum in his lab; on a midnight stroll searching for victims with his pet gorilla; the funny way that he pronounces Agatha (his sister's name in the movie); Lugosi's delivery of the line "Tell him that he's wanted in surgery!"; a subtle little scene where he says to himself "so, he won't do it" in reference to his colleague who won't inject him with the needed spinal fluid; the way his face lights up when he sees Louise Currie, his next intended victim; and many more fun, wonderful and bizarre little moments.

It's an underappreciated performance in an underappreciated little movie. So, the next time you watch *The Ape Man*, don't be embarrassed, but just sit back and let the joy flow over you. You'll feel rejuvenated.

(continued)

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What the critics have had to say about *The Ape Man* over the years:

Monogram's writer didn't have to wipe the dust from Bela Lugosi's *Ape Man*; he had to rake the mold off... *The Ape Man* is a repeater, a poor imitation of those horror things, you know, the doctor creating a monster, etc.... The horrors in this picture just don't come off effectively. It's all too old to hold interest.

—*New York Daily News*, 3/17/43.

Lugosi Chiller... horror specialist Bela Lugosi is called upon to devote his skill to the portrayal of a scientist who turns half ape and murderer.

Newshounds Wallace Ford and Louise Currie track down this killer in the unprecedented and spectacular manner of celluloid reporters.

—*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 3/19/43.

The bogey man is loose again. Bela Lugosi, one of the ranking horror experts of the cinema goes to town in *The Ape Man*, new picture at the Colony Theatre... The production has exciting moments for patrons so inclined, although it isn't one of the best horror cinemas.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 3/19/43.

Monogram has borrowed liberally from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dracula* and other time-worn horror film ideas and is now serving them up as a potpourri called *The Ape Man*. It's good for laughs which aren't in the script, and Bela Lugosi rigged out in a shaggy beard and formal morning attire, ambling like an ape and sharing a cage with a gorilla, scares nobody. It's strictly for dual support... Lugosi seems somewhat bewildered and bemused by his role and acts accordingly.

—*Variety*, 3/17/43.

Estimate: Thriller has the usual exploitation angles... This is in the usual tradition, and it will fit neatly into any thrill or horror combo. The title is attractive, and the goings-on will satisfy those who like this type of film. Although there isn't much new, it has been completely handled. With the proper exploitation, it should be okay.

—*The Exhibitor*, 2/24/43

The Ape Man (Monogram) It's about: A scientist who turns men into beasts (not Hitler, kiddies). Bela Lugosi, a crackpot scientist, turns himself into an ape and then proceeds to trap human beings. All he had to do was reach out and grab us. We were too limp for resistance.

Your Reviewer says: They sure can scare us in pictures like these.

—*Photoplay*, May 1943.

The Ape Man is another of those films that cause the hair to stand on one's head... others will concede it to be hilarious burlesque... Bela Lugosi, in a 'horrible' makeup, gives another of the performances that ad-dicts of the gruesome expect of him and applaud.

—*Hollywood Reporter*, March 1943.

Lugosi Outnumbered. Bela Lugosi's followers are in for something of a letdown in the case of this venture in horror due to the failure on the part of his associates, before the camera and behind it, to give the enterprise that semblance of realism which films of fright depend on for effectiveness... Overdeliberation in unfolding the plot, abetted by dialogue which overwhelms the cast, defeats the purpose of the enterprise.

—*Motion Picture Herald*, 2/27/43.

A routine program horror melodrama. The story revolves around a scientist, who, after turning himself partly into an ape, murders humans in order to acquire from them the spinal fluids he needs to cure himself. A



similar theme was used in Monogram's *The Ape*, produced in 1940. It is far-fetched stuff, and the treatment lacks originality, but it is chilling enough to satisfy followers of this type of entertainment. Throughout the action a silly looking character appears in many scenes. It is not until the end that he identifies himself as the author and remarks, "Silly, isn't it?" That just about sums up the picture... Too horrifying for children.

—*Harrison's Reports*, 2/20/43.

The Ape Man, latest horror entry from Monogram, is expertly figured for its market. Hoke factors are stressed without apologies and there are moments of well sustained suspense to add the proper touch. Production dress under the helm of the Sam Katzman-Jack Dietz unit gives suitable framework to the Barney A. Sarecky script and direction by William Beaudine points up yarn's main chill factors. Sarecky also served as associate producer.

Bela Lugosi continues his blood-thirsty ways as a pseudo-scientist... Louise Currie brightens the proceedings noticeably in the femme lead.

—*Daily Variety*, 2/22/43.

The tortured situation of Dr. Brewster, who feels himself tending to join the animals and wants to be locked up so he will not do misdeeds, is similar to that of Larry Talbot in *The Wolfman*, just as the two films have parallel titles. But this situation is so badly handled that neither pity nor even compassion is felt for Brewster... The script is incredibly inept, and Lugosi is simply lost in the stupidity of it all... Although the competition is keen, it is probably his worst Monogram picture.

—*The Count, The Life and Films of Bela 'Dracula' Lugosi* by Arthur Lennig, 1974.

Despite some interesting moments, its shock elements are weakened by lack of suspense and stereotyped characters. The drab production values not quite disguised by David Milton's art direction do contribute to the ominous atmosphere of the plot. The asset of the tale is Lugosi's performance...

—*The Films of Bela Lugosi* by Richard Bojarski, 1980.

Lugosi and the ape have an odd sort of rapport which recalls a similar teaming in *Murders In The Rue Morgue*; but this is comedy material played straight.

—*Horror and Science Fiction Films II* by Donald C. Willis, 1982.

An unbeatable combination: Beaudine and Lugosi! ... incredible, typically ridiculous Monogram studios horror... great stuff!

—*The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* by Michael Weldon, 1983.

The Ape Man is generally considered the nadir of this admittedly undistinguished series, but surprisingly it doesn't hold up too badly... it has a little less mayhem than most in the series... Logic and detail were never Monogram strong points, and the film abounds in the dearth of them... a certain pathos in Lugosi's demeanor under makeup that reminds one of his role in *Island Of Lost Souls*, combined with the slightly more careful scripting and direction (this was one of the Beaudine's) make *The Ape Man* one of the more tolerable and even mildly rewarding of the Monogram Lugosi.

—*More Classics of the Horror Film* by William K. Everson, 1986.

No actor should have been subjected to the indignities heaped upon Lugosi in this role. Ludicrous makeup... poor lighting, and static pacing added up to the Hungarian's most demeaning film role. Yet considering all that was working against him, Lugosi played the role like the seasoned professional that he was.

—Don Leifert, *Filmfax* magazine, 1989.

...his most notorious '40s film... The movie does have its devotees, ranging from audiences with absolutely no taste, to sadists who enjoy the sight of the heroine, the lovely Louise Currie, climactically lashing poor, hairy Bela with a whip.

—*Karloff and Lugosi* by Greg Mank, 1990.

...has long been prized as a classic of Bad Cinema, an accolade it both does and doesn't deserve... Barney Sarecky's screenplay... is the height of distinguished foolishness... there are indications hijinks are perhaps intentionally absurd this round... remarkably agreeable, played to the hilt by Lugosi and a Monogram "dream cast"...

—*A Critical Guide To Horror Film Series* by Ken Hanke, 1991

...its notorious reputation grows partly from the fact that it's one of the most enjoyable and popular of Lugosi's many bad films... Filled with incident and unintentional humor, *The Ape Man* has attracted horror buffs, general film fans, the "camp" crowd, worst film festival organizers and public domain videotape peddlers by the carload. It's a Golden Turkey of the most beloved kind.

—*Poverty Row Horrors* by Tom Weaver, 1993.

... it presents a poignant illustration of the actor's unflappable professionalism in the face of absurdity, and, as such, the film will always have an audience of Lugosi admirers.

—Mark A. Miller from *Bela Lugosi, Midnight Marquee Actors Series*, 1995.

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INGA (1967) Marie Liljedahl (*Eugenie...*) is the virginal 17-year-old who comes to live with her free-thinking Aunt after her parents are killed in an accident. She becomes infatuated with her Aunt's younger lover and blossoms into womanhood. One of the top-grossing films of the decade. GM12 \$20.00

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NOCTURNA, GRANDAUGHTER OF DRACULA (1979) A strange "disco-horror" hybrid featuring belly dancer Nia Bonet as the granddaughter of Dracula (John Carradine) and Yvonne De Carlo as "Jugulia." Plenty of T & A and music by Gloria Gaynor & Vicki Sue Robinson. ISE201 \$20.00

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NEW WAVE GODZILLA

Five new Godzilla movies have been produced in Japan within the past five years which most of America has never seen. Here is another in our series of interviews with actors, technicians, and writers of this "New Wave" of Godzilla!

Takao Okawara Interview - Take 3

by David Milner

Translation by Yoshihiko Shibata

Takao Okawara directed *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* (1992), *Godzilla Vs. MechaGodzilla* (1993), and *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* (1995). Mr.

Okawara also directed *Super Girl Reiko* (1991) and *Yamato Takeru* (1994).

Cult Movies: I've heard that Toho originally planned to produce *Godzilla Vs. Godzilla* instead of *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. Is that true?

Takao Okawara: Yes.

CM: What was *Godzilla Vs. Godzilla* going to be like?

TO: Godzilla's ghost was going to appear about forty years after Godzilla was killed by the Oxygen Destroyer. The ghost gradually was going to materialize into Godzilla, and then that Godzilla was going to do battle with the Godzilla seen in the last few Godzilla films. (Godzilla is killed by the Oxygen Destroyer at the end of *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* (1954).)

Godzilla Vs. Godzilla may still be made, so I can't tell you anymore about it. I'm sorry.

CM: I've heard that after *Godzilla Vs. Godzilla* was rejected, Toho considered producing *Godzilla Vs. Bagan*. I've also heard that Atragon was going to be in *Godzilla Vs. Bagan*. Is any of that true? (Godzilla first was going to be pitted against Bagan, a monster that could transmute into a "water god," a "monkeygod," and a "dragon god," in *Godzilla 1985* (1984). Shortly after *Godzilla Vs. Biollante* (1989) was released, Toho considered pitting Mothra against a minotaur-like monster named Bagan in *Mothra Vs. Bagan*. Atragon is the submarine featured in *Atragon* (1963).)

TO: I heard about *Godzilla Vs. Bagan* while *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* was being planned, but I didn't hear anything about its plot. So, I don't know if Atragon was going to be in it or not.

CM: Who came up with the idea for *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*?

(Godzilla does battle with a monster created by the Oxygen Destroyer in the movie.)

TO: I know that Kazuki Omori wrote the story outline for *Godzilla Vs. Godzilla*. However, I don't know who came up with the idea for *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. My best guess is that it came from one of the members of Toho's planning department. (Mr. Omori wrote and directed *Godzilla Vs. Biollante* and *Godzilla Vs. Ghidrah* (1991), but only wrote *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* and *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.)

CM: Did Toho ask Mr. Omori to write the script for *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*, or did he volunteer to do so?

TO: Shogo Tomiyama asked Mr. Omori to write the script. (Mr. Tomiyama co-produced the six most recent Godzilla films with Tomoyuki Tanaka.)

CM: Did you meet with Mr. Omori and Mr. Tomiyama to write it?

TO: Yes. Koichi Kawakita also was present at the meetings. (Mr. Kawakita directed the special effects for the last six Godzilla movies.)

CM: Which elements did each of you contribute to the screenplay?

TO: The original story outline was written by

Mr. Omori and Mr. Tomiyama. However, Mr. Kawakita was the one who suggested that Destroyer gradually grow from a microscopic life form into a huge monster.

I was not happy with the Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence that was in the first draft of the script. I felt that it did not create any sympathy for the people who were fighting Destroyer. So, I added the scene in which Yukari Yamane is attacked by Destroyer. (Yoko Ishino plays Yukari, who happens to be the granddaughter of Dr. Kyohei Yamane, the paleontologist in both *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* and *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955).)

CM: Who decided to kill Godzilla?



TO: That was Mr. Kawakita's idea. I remember that during the shooting of *Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla*, Mr. Kawakita said that the next Godzilla film should have much more impact.

CM: Who came up with the idea to have Godzilla attack Hong Kong?

TO: I don't know. However, I do know that the Hong Kong sequence was not in the story outline for *Godzilla Vs. Godzilla*. The sequence first appeared in the story outline for *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.

CM: Who decided to have Emiko Yamane return? (Momoko Kochi plays Emiko, the daughter of Dr. Yamane, in both *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* and *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.)

TO: Mr. Tomiyama. By the way, Mr. Omori was the one who came up with the idea that Emiko did not marry Ogata because she was so upset by the death of Dr. Serizawa. (At the beginning of *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters*, Emiko decides not to enter into her prearranged marriage to Daisuke Serizawa, the inventor of the Oxygen Destroyer, because of her love for a marine officer named Hideto Ogata. At the end of the movie, Dr. Serizawa commits suicide so that the knowledge needed to build an Oxygen Destroyer will not fall into the wrong hands.)

CM: How many drafts of the screenplay did Mr. Omori prepare?

TO: He prepared three drafts.

CM: When was the final draft completed?

TO: It was completed at the end of May, 1995. (*Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* opened in Japan at the beginning of December, 1995.)

CM: In what ways was the final draft different from the first one?

TO: I made two major changes. I added the attack on Yukari to the Metropolitan Police Vs.

Destroyer sequence, and I decided to have Destroyer destroy the helicopter that had just brought Miki Saegusa and Meru Ozawa to Haneda Airport. I added that scene because I felt the ending needed to be a little more jarring. (Megumi Odaka plays Miki, a psychic with a telepathic link to Godzilla, in the last six Godzilla films. Sayaka Osawa plays Meru, a psychic who only appears in *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.)

CM: I've heard that the battle between Godzilla and Destroyer originally was going to take place at the 1996 Tokyo World City Exposition. Is that true?

TO: That's right. The battle originally was going to take place at the exposition, but it was cancelled. (Yukio Aoshima, the Governor of Tokyo, cancelled the exposition because he felt that it would cost taxpayers too much money.)

CM: I've heard that Mothra originally was going to be in *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. Is that true?

TO: No. I've never heard that.

CM: Were only Godzilla, Destroyer, and Godzilla Junior going to be in the movie from the start?

TO: Yes. That's right.

CM: Did you select the members of the cast?

TO: I did, but I had to get Mr. Tomiyama's approval.

CM: How much time did you spend in production?

TO: We spent fifty days shooting the standard footage. (Mr. Kawakita and the members of his staff spent three months shooting the special effects footage.)

CM: Did you direct any of the special effects footage?

TO: I directed the entire Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence. It was the most difficult sequence for us to film.

CM: How long did you spend filming it?

TO: Twenty days.

CM: Were any changes made to the story during production?

TO: Several were made. Godzilla and Godzilla Junior, for example, originally were not going to meet. Destroyer originally was going to kill Godzilla Junior much sooner.

CM: Who came up with the idea to have Godzilla and Godzilla Junior meet?

TO: Mr. Kawakita.

CM: Did budgetary constraints force any changes to be made?

TO: No standard scenes were cut because of budgetary constraints. However, I've heard that a few special effects scenes were. Several standard scenes originally were going to be shot on location instead of on the set, and vice versa.

CM: Was the production budget any larger or smaller than the production budgets for the other Godzilla movies that you directed?

TO: It was about the same.

CM: The Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence is very reminiscent of *Aliens* (1986). Did you intend to have it turn out that way?

TO: Any footage featuring a battle between a military force and a monster like Destroyer would be reminiscent of *Aliens*. I generally am hesitant to include footage in a film if it will remind the members of the audience of some other film, but in the case of the Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence, I said, "Why not?"

CM: Both the first and last scenes take place at an airport. Did you intend to have them mirror each other?

TO: The Hong Kong airport sequence was in the original story outline. (Godzilla appears in Hong Kong at the beginning of *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. There was no scene featuring a plane flying right by Godzilla in the outline. I came up with the idea to add that scene just before the final draft of the script was completed. Since the model builders were going to have to make several airplanes for the Haneda Airport sequence anyway, I thought that including one in

the Hong Kong sequence wouldn't require much extra work. So, I suggested the idea to Mr. Kawakita. (Godzilla and Destroyer do battle at Haneda, which is one of Tokyo's two major airports.)

I wanted to have Godzilla destroy the plane, but I knew that none of the airlines would allow us to shoot in one of their cockpits if I did. As it turned out, Godzilla's appearance was impressive enough by itself, so I was satisfied anyway. (The plane flies by Godzilla immediately after he makes his first appearance.)

I asked someone who worked for Japan Airlines if we could shoot in one of the company's simulators. He fortunately gave us permission. Since only the special effects staff went to Hong Kong, Mr. Kawakita had to add the footage that's seen in the windows of the simulator.

CM: What location filming did you do?

TO: I directed the Omaezaki sequence. (Godzilla Junior makes his first appearance at Omaezaki beach.) The special effects staff shot Hong Kong, but the standard staff filmed the people running away from Godzilla. So, I had to matte my footage onto Mr. Kawakita's. (Matting is the process by which footage is superimposed onto other footage.)

CM: Are the people Japanese?

TO: The people are Japanese instead of Chinese.

CM: Did the special effects staff shoot Miki and Meru mourning as Godzilla Junior died?

TO: The footage of Godzilla Junior dying was supposed to be shot by the special effects staff before we began filming Ms. Odaka and Ms. Osawa. However, the special effects staff fell behind schedule. So, we had to shoot without being able to refer to the footage of Godzilla Junior.

CM: Did you do any improvisation?

TO: Almost none. I tried to stick to the screenplay as much as possible. There were a number of last minute changes to the screenplay. The Oxygen Destroyer, for example, was first mentioned at the beginning of the script, but I felt that the device should be treated as a forbidden subject. So, I delayed the first mention of it until the middle of *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.

CM: Did you come up with the idea to show footage from *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* immediately after the Oxygen Destroyer was mentioned?

TO: That was my idea.

CM: Was the mood on the set any different from the mood on the sets of the other Godzilla movies you directed?

TO: Yes. It was different.

CM: In what way?

TO: We felt that we had to do our very best.

CM: How much time did you spend in post-production?

TO: Two months.

CM: Were there any scenes shot for *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* that weren't used?

TO: No. All of the scenes were used. We just made a few cuts here and there.

CM: Why did you make them?

TO: Running time. The Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence originally was longer. I cut it because I was afraid the members of the audience would get bored.

CM: I've heard that you shot several different endings in case the one you were planning to use prematurely got out. Is that true?

TO: That's just a rumor. I was very concerned with the ending. I had to make sure that Godzilla died with dignity, and I was afraid that if I put too much emphasis on Godzilla Junior's resurrection, Godzilla's death would not be dignified enough.

CM: Did you consider using any other endings?

TO: Mr. Kawakita suggested that we show Godzilla die, have the ending credits roll, and

then show Godzilla Junior. We tried that, but it left too much of a gap between Godzilla's death and Godzilla Junior's resurrection. One person said that most of the members of the audience would leave during the credits, so they would never even see Godzilla Junior.

CM: Who came up with the idea to show footage from *Godzilla - King Of The Monsters* and all of the more recent Godzilla films while the ending credits were being shown?

TO: Mr. Tomiyama.

CM: What was working with Megumi Odaka like?

TO: She is a sensitive actress, but she needs advice once in a while. Ms. Odaka told me that she was very impressed by *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* at its premiere on December 9th.

CM: What was working with Momoko Kochi like?

TO: I worked with her for only one day. Actors and actresses of her generation were very well trained, so I was very impressed by her. I remember that Ms. Kochi was the one who suggested that the Oxygen Destroyer be referred to not as a "weapon," but instead as an "invention," in

Any footage featuring a battle between a military force and a monster like Destroyer would be reminiscent of Aliens. I generally am hesitant to include footage in a film if it will remind the members of the audience of some other film, but in the case of the Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence, I said, "Why not?"

Godzilla Vs. Destroyer.

CM: How closely did you work with music composer Akira Ifukube?

TO: The production schedule was very tight. It was even tighter than the production schedules for my other Godzilla movies. Mr. Ifukube, along with the other members of the staff, first saw the rough cut on November 13th, and the score was recorded on the 27th and 28th. I remember Mr. Ifukube said that although music composers run out of ideas by their sixties, he had to pay tribute to Godzilla in some way because *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* was going to be the last Godzilla film made for some time. (Mr. Ifukube is eighty-two years old.)

During the first screening of the final cut, which was held about five days after the screening of the rough cut, Mr. Ifukube said that there was no need for music in the Metropolitan Police Vs. Destroyer sequence. However, most of the members of the staff thought that the sequence did need music. So, Mr. Ifukube wrote music for it. What he wrote wasn't bad, but it sounded too much like the Super X III theme, so I decided not to use it. (The Super X III, an aircraft armed with freezing weapons, is used to counter Godzilla in *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.)

CM: Did you offer Mr. Ifukube much advice about the scores for *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* and *Godzilla Vs. MechaGodzilla*?

TO: He felt that music was not needed in scenes that I felt did need music and vice versa. In both cases, I would ask Mr. Ifukube to write music, and later decide whether to use it or not.

CM: Are you pleased with the way *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* turned out?

TO: I gave it my all. Despite that, if I were to be picky, I would find a countless number of faults in it. I remember that Mr. Omori came up to me after he saw the movie on November 13th and said, "Mr. Okawara, the climax should be more dramatic." I replied by saying, "I told you." That's when I decided to add the helicopter scene.

I am satisfied with *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*. Many people have told me that it is the most interesting of my Godzilla films, so I am satisfied with it.

CM: What was working with Koji Hashimoto like? (Mr. Hashimoto directed *Godzilla 1985*. Mr. Okawara worked on the movie as an assistant director.)

TO: He was very honest and straightforward. Mr. Hashimoto primarily used conventional techniques. I thought that he should take a few more risks.

CM: What was working with Akira Takarada like? (Mr. Takarada, who plays Environmental Planning Board Head Joji Minamino in *Godzilla Vs. Mothra*, is best known as Ogata and Fuji, the Japanese astronaut in *Godzilla Vs. Monster Zero* (1965).)

TO: He was very helpful to me. He helped set the right mood on the set. I hope that Mr. Takarada will be in the first of the twenty-first century Godzilla films. He said that he would be in it at the recent unveiling of the statue of Godzilla. (The meter-tall statue is located in Hibiya Park in Tokyo.)

CM: What was working with Kenji Sahara like? (Mr. Sahara, who plays United Nations Godzilla Countermeasures Center Head Takayuki Segawa in *Godzilla Vs. MechaGodzilla* and *Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla*, is best known as Kazuo Fujita, the inventor in *King Kong Vs. Godzilla* (1962), and Jiro Torahata, the entrepreneur in *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* (1964).)

TO: He is different from Mr. Takarada. He concentrates more on his own role.

CM: Which of your Godzilla movies is your favorite?

TO: *Godzilla Vs. MechaGodzilla*.

CM: What do you think of *Godzilla Vs. Space Godzilla*?

TO: Many people like that film, but I think that it has very few impressive scenes. So, I don't understand why so many people like it.

CM: How did you like *Gamera - Giant Monster Decisive Air Battle* (1995)?

TO: Shusuke Kaneko made the entire movie very suspenseful. In addition, the special effects were very good. (Mr. Kaneko directed the movie.)

I know that the film was shot outdoors with natural light, and I think that helped make it so impressive.

CM: Why did Toho stop making Godzilla films?

TO: I know that Mr. Tomiyama was the one who decided to put the series on hiatus, but I don't know why he made that decision.

CM: Do you think that the decision was a good one?

TO: It's impossible for us to tell now. We'll know in a few years. We received a number of petitions urging us not to kill Godzilla. Some of them arrived even after *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer* opened. So, I think that it was a good idea for us to show the resurrection of Godzilla Junior.

CM: Will the next Godzilla movie be released at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

TO: Probably.

CM: Why did Toho decide to make *Mothra*? (Mothra is going to do battle Death Ghidrah in the movie, which will be released in Japan in December.)

TO: *Godzilla Vs. Mothra* was the most successful of the recent Godzilla films.

CM: What are your plans for the future?

TO: I don't have any specific plans at the moment. ■

Cult Movies Underground



Bela Lugosi, John Carradine, Pat McKee and Wanda McKay in *Voodoo Man*.

by Buddy Barnett

Since our last issue, a few of the cult movie greats have passed on to the other side. I'd like to pay tribute to them and their contributions to the world of cult film.

The beautiful actress and model, Wanda McKay expired on April 11, 1996 from cancer. She was 80 years old. *Cult Movies* fans mainly remember her for her costarring roles in two Bela Lugosi Monogram vehicles, *Bowery At Midnight* (1942) and *Voodoo Man* (1944).

Her real name was Dorothy McKay and she was born in Portland Oregon. She was originally a hostess for TWA. She won the title Miss American Aviation at the Birmingham Air Show Beauty Pageant in 1938 and was subsequently signed by Paramount Pictures to an acting contract.

Wanda appeared in over 50 feature films and did many television shows like *The Lone Ranger* and *The Cisco Kid*. Most of her movies were 'B' movies and these were mostly horror movies, westerns and mysteries. She did quite a few movies at Monogram and PRC studios, the poverty row kings.

Some of her most interesting films, in addition to the two Lugosi pictures, were *The Black Raven* (1943) with George Zucco, *The Monster Maker* (1944), *Raiders Of Ghost City* (1944) a Universal serial, *The Golden Eye* (1948) a Charlie Chan picture, *Jungle Goddess* (1948), and *Because Of Eve* (1948) an exploitation picture about childbirth.

After she retired from acting, she was married to composer/musician Hoagy Carmichael. She was a great beauty and a fun actress and *Cult Movies* honors her.

Another favorite here at *Cult Movies*, was actor Lyle Talbot. Talbot, who passed away recently at age 92, probably appeared in more movies and television shows than just about any other actor who ever lived.

He once stated in an interview that he never turned a job down.

He is most famous today for his appearances in several Ed Wood films including *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and *Glen Or Glenda*. He is also remembered for many serials, especially *The Adventures Of Batman and Robin* (as Commissioner Gordon) and *Atom Man Vs Superman* (as Lex Luthor).

His last film appearance was in Bret Thompson's *The Haunted World Of Ed Wood*, where he tells some pretty funny stories about his experiences working with director Wood.

Also, Patric Knowles from *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man*, *The Strange Case Of Dr Rx*, *Mystery Of Marie Roget*, *The Adventures Of Robin Hood* and *The Wolfman* recently departed this earthly plane of existence, and Jon Pertwee, who was the best *Doctor Who* from the cult favorite long running BBC television series of the same name just recently passed on.

I say farewell to all and we'll remember you in your movies and television shows.

...

Something Weird Video mogul Mike Vraney has branched out into television production. His first television series, *Reel Wild Cinema*, debuted recently on cable's USA Network and the show is pretty darn good.

Reel Wild Cinema is basically a compilation show featuring the best of classic exploitation cinema. Sandra Bernhard is the hostess, who tells jokes, presents the clips, interviews guests (including Dave Friedman and Russ Meyer), and enlightens the viewer on exploitation movie history. Miss Bernhard is kind of an exploitation movie in herself. Cult movie fave Frank Henenlotter does the film cutting for the program.

The show is basically an hour long freak show, but hey, I love freak shows and you should too. Best of all, there aren't two stupid robots telling jokes during the

film clips. Congrats to Vraney and his partners on a job well done. Be sure and watch *Reel Wild Cinema* on the USA Network at midnight every Sunday night.

...

The ultimate book of glamour and pinup queens, *Va Va Voom!*, has just been released and features in-depth chapters on 19 of the all-time beauty queens of the classic '50s era. Written and compiled by Steve Sullivan, *Va Va Voom!* is 288 pages and includes over 200 photos (including 16 color pages) of all your favorite love goddesses.

Movie actresses, models and strippers are all included in this book. Read about (and best of all, look at hot pictures of) June Wilkinson, Candy Barr, Julie Newmar, Brigitte Bardot, Mamie Van Doren, Bettie Page, Irish McCalla, Marilyn Monroe and many more. Also included are detailed filmographies and listings of major magazine appearances.

Va Va Voom! is published by General Publishing Group and Rhino and is available in most bookstores for the price of \$17.95 (\$24.95 in Canada). This book is for everyone who likes to look at beautiful pictures of breathtakingly beautiful women. Highly recommended!

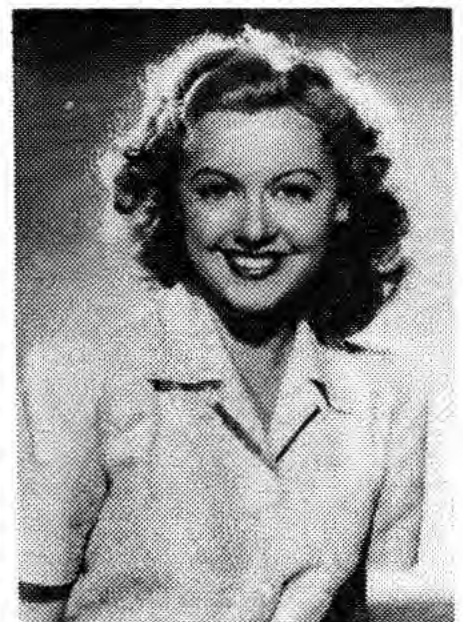
...

The premier horror star of Spain, Paul Naschy (real name Jacinto Molina) has returned to his original wolfman character in a new horror movie, *Lycantropus*, just produced in Madrid. For the last twenty years Naschy has concentrated primarily on directing, so this new werewolf movie should prove to be an exciting experience.

Lycantropus was produced by Primitivo Rodriguez for his company Videokine S. L. The film was directed by Francisco R. Gordillo and written by Jacinto Molina (Naschy).

...

I've seen a few good movies in the theatres lately (and lots of bad ones as well). Some of the stuff that I've seen recently: *Fargo*, great movie and a totally twisted black comedy; *Twister*, fun movie, it's like a giant monster movie where the monster destroys the town, but in this film, the monsters are tornadoes;



Wanda McKay



Paul Naschy

Mission Impossible, it sucks, without a doubt the worst movie of the year; *Haunted World Of Ed Wood*, good documentary, shot on film; *Rumble In The Bronx* with Jackie Chan, entertaining action comedy, Chan is amazing! Acting and dialogue is horrendously bad but very funny; *Cold Comfort Farm*, a weird British comedy peopled with eccentric characters. A very funny film and surprisingly uplifting.

I also saw a revival of *Apocalypse Now*. It's a classic cult film and we'll be having a special feature on it's 20th anniversary in a future issue of *Cult Movies*.

You've asked for it, so starting this issue you've got it. In this issue we inaugurate our Cult Movie Li-

brary, the weirdest and most wonderful collection of videos that we've selected for your viewing pleasure. Now you can order these videos direct from *Cult Movies Magazine*. See our ads in this issue.

Midnight Marquee Press has just released a new book entitled *Guilty Pleasures of the Horror Film* and it is superb. I've just finished reading it and was thoroughly entertained. *Guilty Pleasures* features essays by a variety of authors on weird and sometimes embarrassingly bad horror films. Next issue we'll have a full review. You can get it at your local book

store or by ordering direct from Midnight Marquee Press, 9721 Brittain Lane, Baltimore, MD 21234 for \$20 plus \$3 shipping.

Another great book that I finished recently was *The Complete Films Of Vincent Price* by Lucy Chase Williams. The Vincent Price volume of Citadel Book's long running *Films Of...* series is undoubtedly the best one that they have ever published. Also, the finest, and actually the only good book ever published on Vincent Price. Available at most bookstores everywhere.

That's all for issue #18. Have a great summer! ■



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June Wilkinson and Mickey Rooney in *The Private Lives of Adam and Eve*.

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by Marta Dobrovitz

Having just read issue #17's "Deep Inside *Cult Movies*" editor's note by Michael Copner, I guess it is befitting that one of his own, so to speak, would take umbrage at the very words he has put forth and thus "rock the boat."

"My question-make that my alarm-has to do with a mindless mentality... The kind of outlook that would take to a film like The Wizard of Oz and make it one of the world's most wonderful, best loved classics. What is the moral to The Wizard Of Oz? For starters, it's, 'Stay down on the farm; don't rock the boat.' The whole wonderful, loveable message to that film is a warning to anyone who would dare to be different, dare to be daring. It's far better to stay in safe, bland, black and white Kansas than to roam, venture forth and dream your dreams in subversive, psychedelic color! There's no place like home, so just stay put, don't question, and don't make waves."

—Michael Copner, *Cult Movies* #17

I must protest his vision of the world as "mindless" simply because many of us would prefer a "perfect" one. Life in this world, as I see it, is becoming more alarming. With the hateful, racist, non-commitment, irresponsible, disrespectful, hurtful, killing-without-conscience mentality that abounds in this world, it frightens me as to how we have come to this juncture where wrong is right and bad prevails over good!

When I grew up there was a sense of the way things were — the decent way where people tried to treat others with some sort of dignity and respect as best they could. Today I fear I do not see this common sense. Instead I see violence and anger prevail such as in Oklahoma City where adults and children died all because some people wanted to say — hey, government is bad. Was there no peaceful way of saying this? Did innocent people really have to die for someone else's cause? Why didn't these hate mongers kill themselves if they wanted to make their point? Too selfish? Or just too cowardly to take their own bullet in order to make their point?

Although I realize this world has many problems that I wish I could fix, it just won't happen. But making things worse by going the opposite

direction of truth and justice won't work either. I fear this will only hurt all life in the long run. In any case I ask, in this kind of world, what is wrong with dreaming? With watching movies that were simpler, kinder, and showed a better, easier world than this one has become? Escapism is the key, like it was in the '30s. Escaping the realities of the world in which we live for one that I would hope to live in or find — Shangri La. I do not advocate any kind of censorship, but there are too many "reality" based shows, magazines, films etc., and frankly, I am sick of it! I don't want reality, I already live in it! I want a release from my everyday life, a release from the sadness and worries that I face everyday because the world I see is a cold, lonely and heartless place where people have no regard nor respect for life itself. It is crumbling around my feet and there is nothing I can really do about it except one thing, change my own little world by watching shows and movies that make me happy. If I can make myself happier then the world out there might look a little more hopeful too, at least for a little while till the despair builds up again. People have to know that it is okay to escape from life for a little while in order for them to have a release from everyday pressures. That is what dreams are for. So, why not have that release while one is awake as well?

What makes one release these pressures can be through several different types of movies. I know that I enjoy fantasy films as much as I do action, crime, comedies etc. Each one has a different impact, but still lets me escape in my head for a couple of hours. Getting aggressions out can be very cathartic!

This brings me to a particular fantasy film which Mike seems to have a problem with — *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). I, as so many others, grew up watching this film annually on TV and the only thing I recall getting out of it as a child was that I liked Toto and the Cowardly Lion and hated the Wicked Witch and those flying monkeys — they really scared me and still do! I never really got much more out of it than that, but I did get to go to Oz for a little while and my subconscious was transfixed. I was somehow unwittingly given the gift of imagination through which I could be anything, go anyplace — go to places far away as well as to places that didn't exist anywhere but in my head. It gave me the power to dream of what I wanted

out of life and where I wanted to travel and who I might want to be. Before *Oz* I don't believe I ever realized fantasy even existed, consciously speaking. Perhaps I would have found it another way, but movies have always made me dream of other things. And dreams are what people use in order to achieve something in their lives. They are not used to hide from life and stay in our own back yards.

As I have grown older I find that I enjoy the picture more because I can see and understand more, not only in plot, but production values, dialogue, the songs, acting, all sorts of things. It gives me the desire to learn even more about how things are made; how they work; and question all things that I don't understand or know the answer to.

This brings me to his point or moral of the movie, which is the "idea" that we must not go forth into the more colorful world, but stay at home in our dreary black & white Kansas. I heartily disagree with this revelation. (I grew up watching a black & white TV so, for me, Oz never was more colorful than Kansas).

Dorothy says that she won't ever seek her heart's desire further than her own back yard, because if it isn't there she never really lost it to begin with. To me that says that so many of us think that our happiness lies out there somewhere or in others. In simple truth, our happiness lies within ourselves i.e. "our own back yards." If we look there we may actually find what it is we want from life. This in no way says that we cannot venture forth into the world or other worlds for that matter, but that we should simply question why we wish to do so.

How old is Dorothy anyway, thirteen? Does Mike advocate that children should run away from home? Or, should they realize that home isn't all that bad and that the world may be fun, but home is safety and comfort, no matter where it may be.

I believe that each character defines people's own desires and troubles. Many people have one of the "flaws" that the "Tin Man," "Scarecrow" and "Cowardly Lion" have, and when they go to Oz to find it they learn a truism about what each seeks. For me, truly, the most compelling piece was when the Tin Man gets the heart he so desires and upon receiving it the "wizard" tells him, "...and remember my sentimental friend, that a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others." Something in me was either lacking or bursting to get out, but that statement has and still does affect me deeply. Most of us have feelings of inadequacy — we allow ourselves to be defined by others too much as if they had the answers and that we are nothing. This movie I think speaks to those of us who do have these feelings and lets us know that we can be what we wish as long as we believe in ourselves. These are only my personal views — on the other hand I asked a friend of mine what he thought the picture was about and he replied, "It's about friendship."

All in all, whether we do or don't get a message from the movie and what that message may or may not be is a moot point. Why not just sit back and enjoy the movie as a work of fantasy or horror (depending on which you prefer); amaze yourself with its incredible special effects (for 1939, they were and still are quite remarkable) and if it makes you happy, great and if not at least just enjoy the ride. ■



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Sleaze Sinema



Ilsa: *Tigress of Siberia* #2

by Todd Tjersland

Instead of reviewing the normal evil assortment of sex-n-gore flicks, we'll be sneaking a peek at the latest lurid creep-crop of macabre books and magazines from Transylvania and around the world! Our vile video reviews will return next issue.

Books of the Damned!

Sex, Shocks & Sadism! An A-Z Guide To Erotic Horror Films On Videocassette:

Second Edition by Todd Tjersland (Threat Theatre International, Inc., 1996) This pornographic horror video review book is back, sporting a steamy new full color cover and now it's an even better value than ever at only \$9.95! S&M/bondage/torture, naked vampires, leering bug-eyed maniacs, screaming bloody female victims and more are on parade in more than 130 exclusive photos. For adults only! Exclusively available through special mail order direct from the publisher. Only \$13.00 postage paid from: Threat Theatre International, Inc., P.O. Box 7633, Olympia, WA 98507-7633 (see advertisement this issue).

The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures In Exploitation Filmmaking by John McCarty (St. Martin's Press, 1995) Now here's a fun book that's been getting a bad rap by "high-brow" cinema snooties that obviously expect way too much. *The Sleaze Merchants* has over a dozen interviews and articles on and/or with such legendary exploitation filmmakers as Ed Wood, Ted V. Mikels (*Astro-Zombies*), William Lustig (*Maniac*), H.G. Lewis (*2000 Maniacs*), Jesus Franco (*Awful Dr. Orloff*) and Andy Milligan (*The Ghastly Ones*). While not much for critical dissections or probing questions, it is a nice overview of these types of films and the people who make them, offering new and useful info, trivia and anecdotes for fans of grade B and Z filmmaking alike, all under one cover. I think the reason everyone is slamming McCarty is cuz they're jealous, since he's got about a dozen books out on the market right now! Back-lash city... \$16.95; available at most book stores.

Spaghetti Nightmares: Italian Fantasy-Horror As Seen Through The Eyes Of Their Protagonists by Luca M. Palmerini and Gaetano Mistretta (Fantasma Books, 1996) This book sure sounded great and had lots of juicy full color and B&W photos and poster repros, but it was so poorly written, and the questions asked so damn dumb, that I couldn't believe the wasted opportunities here!

Maybe something was lost in the translation to English? Still, if you want to read the latest interviews with Joe D'Amato, Lucio Fulci and Dario Argento (etc.), this is the book. \$25.95 (yikes!); available at most bookstores.

Zombies: From Past To Present by Javier L. Perea and Hektor Garcia (Imagen Death, 1995) This glossy B&W 50 page digest (in Spanish only) covers zombie movies from *I Walked With A Zombie* to *Dead Alive* along with the obligatory Romero and Fulci stuff. For info, write: Imagen Death at Apdo. 395-45080, Toledo, SPAIN.

Macabre Magazines!

Broken Minds: Sweden's Best "Anti-Mainstream" Magazine (Sweden) A cool opinionated horror and rock-n-roll 'zine that's well-written and informative. Previous issues have covered Lugosi, Ed Wood, Hammer, Lucio

Fulci, and Dario Argento, with plenty of reviews and fascinating in-depth articles. In Swedish only. Sample Copy: \$6.00 (includes Air Mail). Order from: Krister Lojgren, Solskenet 1b, nb. 913 34 Holmsund, SWEDEN.

The Dark Side: The Magazine of The Macabre & Fantastic (England) High-gloss, high-octane British horror to rival *Fangoria*, specializing in European and American horror, gore, sci-fi and fantasy films. Lots of color photos! One year (12 issues) subscription: 60 pounds British Sterling (includes Air Mail); no American currency, please. Order from: Dark Side Subs Dept., Stray Cat Publishing Ltd., P.O. Box 146, Plymouth, Devon PL1 1AX, ENGLAND.

Fatal Visions: Dementia From Down Under (Australia) Excellent Aussie version of *Psychotronic*, covering a wide range of genre-oriented cinematic topics, from all over the world. Hong Kong Action, Horror and Sci-Fi! This quarterly mag remains one of the best and most consistently entertaining publications on the world market, with an impressive 7,000 circulation (includes some U.S. newsstand distribution, too!). Sample Copy: \$6.00. Fatal Visions Party Ltd., P.O. Box 1184, Thornbury, VIC 3071, AUSTRALIA.

Scream Magazine: Weird Movies For Weird People (USA) An always entertaining mish-mash of B-Movies, television and music that's been around quite awhile now. Issue #7 includes articles on Rondo Hatton, Famous TV Werewolves and Driver's Education films. Sample Copy: \$3.95 (U.S.)/\$5.25 (Canada). Order from: Scream, 490 S. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702.

Shocking Images: For Fans Of Fantastic Films (U.S.A.) A spiffy horror and exploitation 'zine that always finds room for something I needed to know, whether it be the latest dope on Mr. Dolemite himself, Rudy Ray Moore, or the films of Michel Soavi (*Dellamorte Dellamore*). One of the consistently worthwhile fanzines! Sample Copy: \$3.95. Order from: Mark Jason Murray, Box 7853, Citrus Heights, CA 95621.

2000 Maniacs: Hot-Blooded Spanish Horror (Spain) A digest-sized Spanish answer to *Fangoria* with beautiful production values, all slick-n-glossy! Lots of crazy psychotronic horror news and reviews, plus hard-core Spanish pornography! Special attention is paid to Raquel Welch and other half-naked cavewomen films in the issue I saw. This is Spanish language only. Manuel Valencia, Apdo. 5251, 46009 Valencia, SPAIN ■



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You'll remember Jeanne Carmen from *Monster of Piedras Blancas*, and you can see her in *Striporama* which is soon to be released to the home market by Something Weird Video. Her career as a model and actress was detailed in a recent cover story in *Film Threat* magazine, and she's among the most popular celebrities at media shows and collectors conventions where she's starting to appear more and more.

In our next issue of *Cult Movies* we'll have an exclusive interview with Jeannie Carmen in which she discusses subjects not covered in recent magazine articles. But we couldn't wait to run some of these fantastic photos, a preview of what we'll be showing you nexttime.

The big news about Jeanne Carmen is as follows:

(1) Her 500-page autobiography, *My Friend Marilyn: The Real Story — Plus other Celebrities I've Played With* is finished, and she and her agent are looking for a publisher.

(2) Her son, author Brandon James, has finished a screenplay titled "Three On The Road" that is loosely based on Jeanne's early life as a NY model and trick shot golfer. It's written in a way that might launch a new trend in filmmaking; he's looking for an agent-director-or producer who might be interested.

Anyone seeking more information about the book



length autobiography or the screenplay — or seeking information about Jeanne Carmen's upcoming shows and personal appearances — is invited to contact: Brandon James, PO Box 3367, Laguna Hills, CA 92653.



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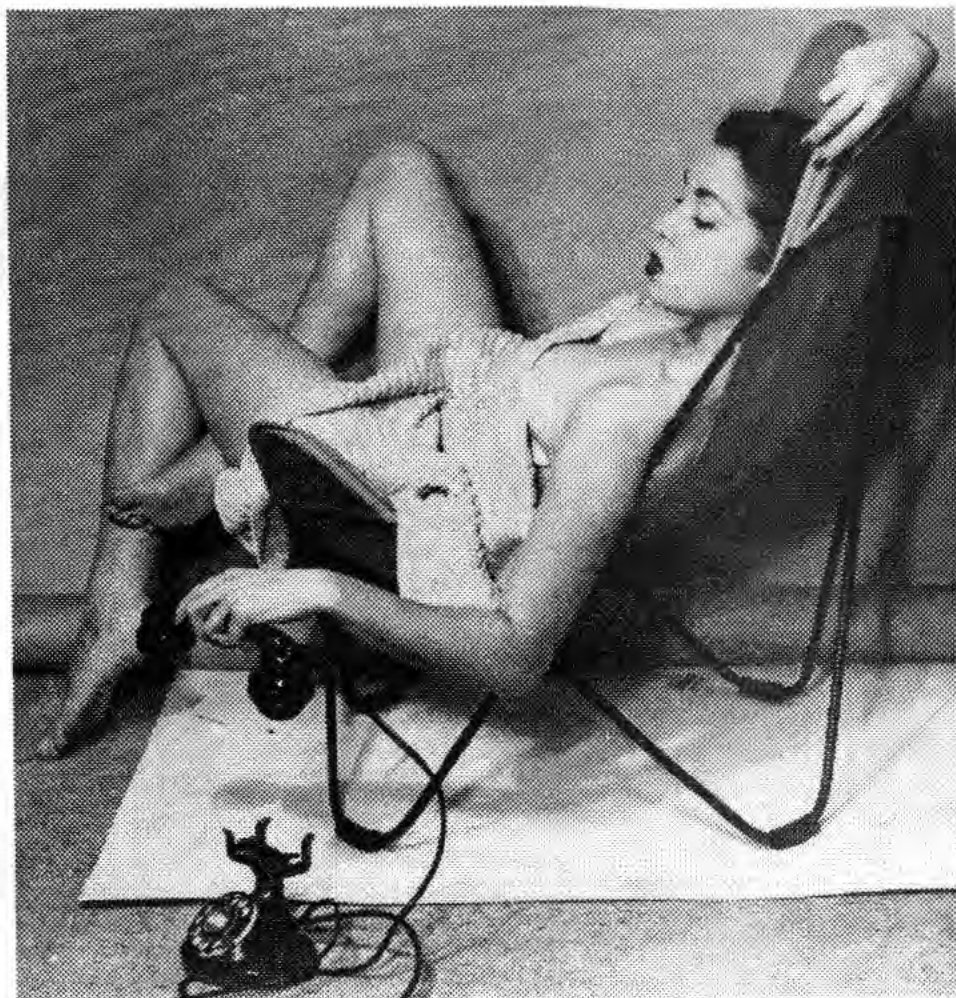
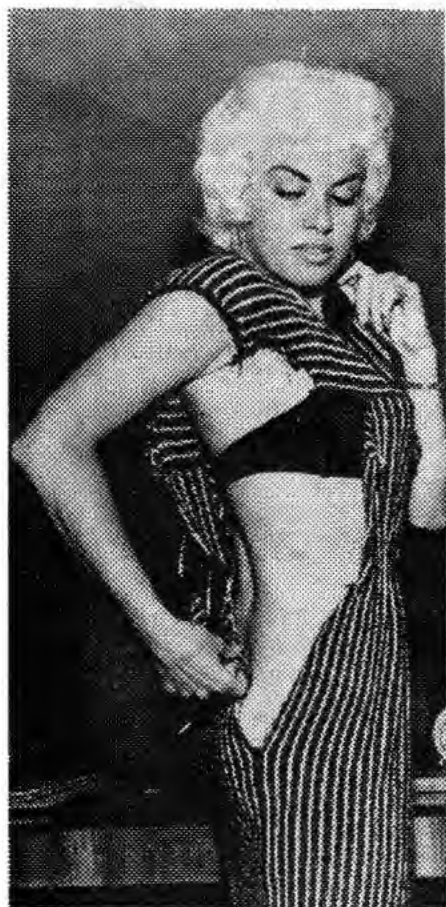
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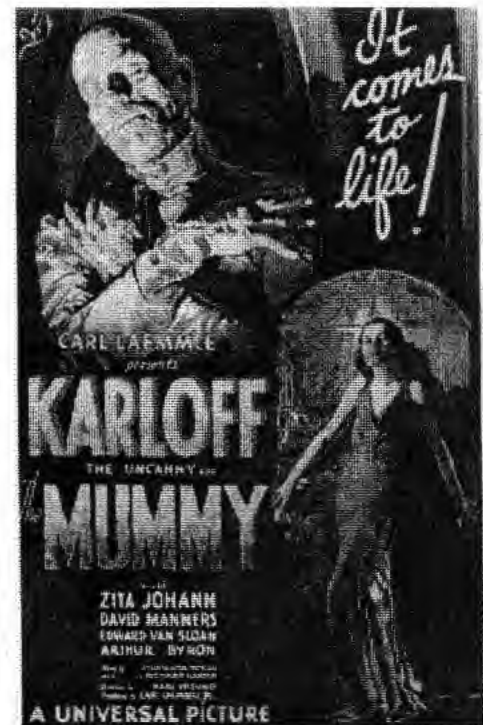


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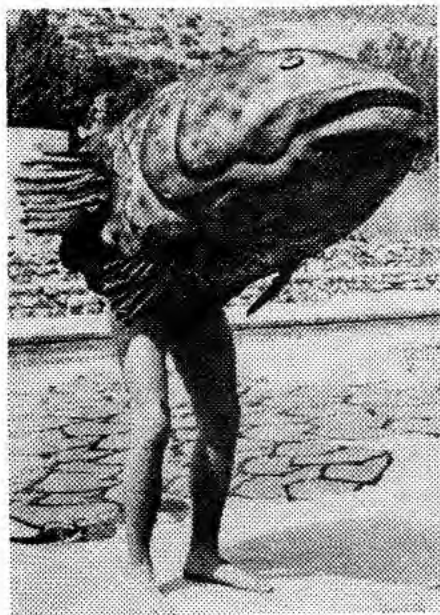
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THE MERMAID

Forever Lost?

by Michael Copner



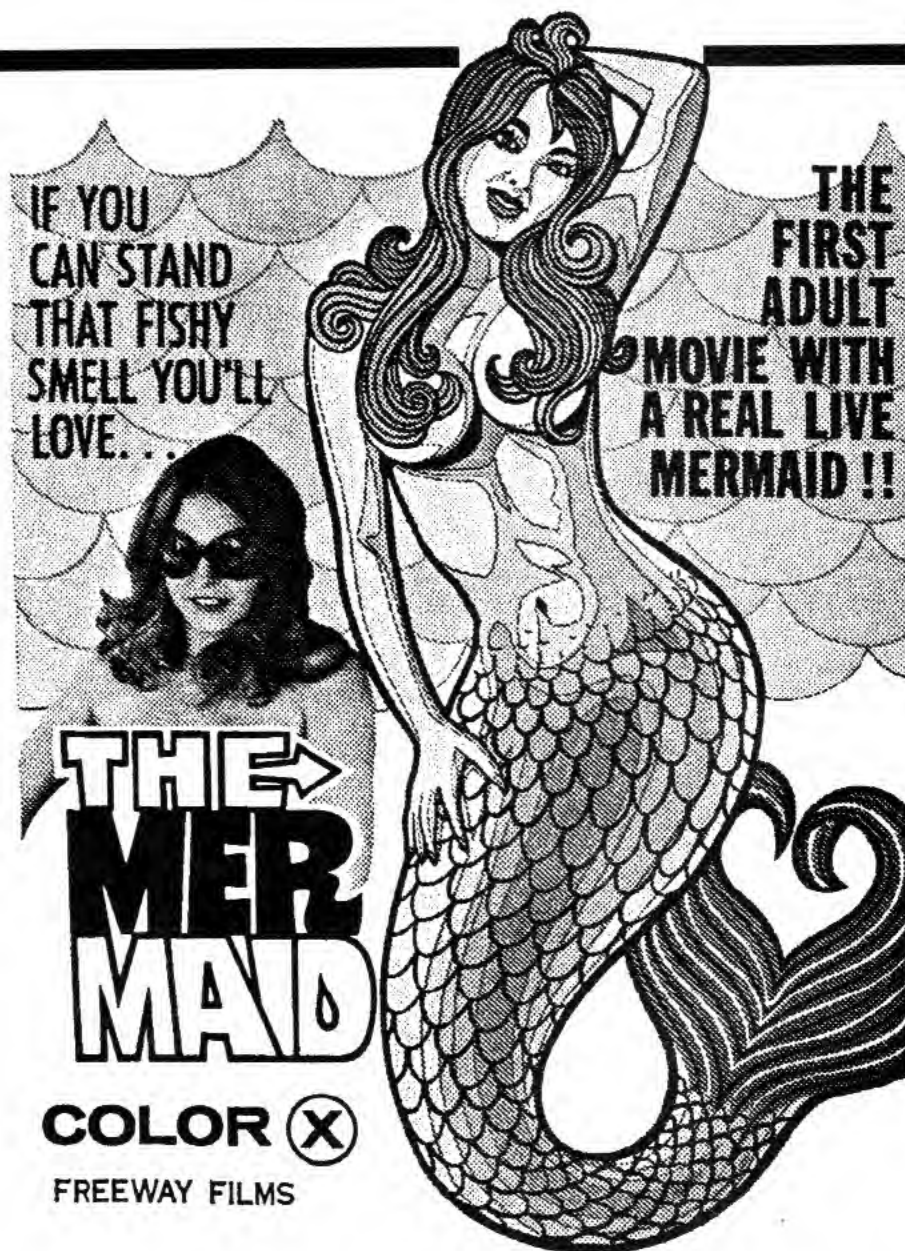
For years I've had a set of very strange stills from *The Mermaid*, a film I've never seen. The film is most likely gone forever, leaving behind only photos, posters and a pressbook to speculate over. We learned that the infamous David F. Friedman had distributed the film, and mentioned it to him during an interview. At first Mr. Friedman was a bit reluctant to speak of the subject!

Cult Movies: You've got to clear up the mystery about *The Mermaid*, and I understand you released the film.

DAVID FRIEDMAN: I was connected with it somewhat.

CM: No one's ever heard of it! Before *Splash* or *Little Mermaid*, here was this film with mermaids living in giant clamshells, and the publicity blurb, "If you can stand that fishy smell..." which is a pretty offensive bit of publicity!

DF: I think I wrote that slogan. In fact I'm sure I did. Danny Martin, who was a deputy sheriff, made a film called *The Big Snatch*; a kidnap story.



I distributed it for him. Then he made *The Mermaid*, which was terrible. And it was so bad I wouldn't put the name Entertainment Ventures, my company label, on the film; but I had a subsidiary company called UTA which was a poster and trailer distribution firm. The head of the company had always wanted to get into film distribution, so I said, "Here's a movie for you."

I don't think *The Mermaid* played more than 20 theatres in the entire United States. I did the advertising campaign for it — and yes, it was offensive.

CM: And you only had 20 theatrical bookings?

DF: I think that was about it. We had 10 prints made up, and some of them were brand new; never were shown anywhere. Then one day, Armand at UTA just said to hell with it, and junked the whole batch of them. Threw them out.

CM: So there are no more prints of *The Mermaid* in the world?

DF: I think they were all destroyed. ■



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Stuff To Read



Human Monsters: The Bizarre Psychology of Movie Villains, by George E. Turner and Michael H. Price. Foreword by Fay Wray. Afterword by Vincent Price. \$16.95 Available from Kitchen Sink Press.

In the last 24 months, there have been many essential genre books unleashed on fandom. Michael F. Blake's two books on Lon Chaney and *The Complete Films of Vincent Price* by Lucy Chase Williams are three outstanding volumes that have graced bookstore shelves in the last two years, and are essential to any self-respecting collector's library. With the release of George Turner and Michael Price's *Human Monsters*, a fourth classic is now available for fans of bizarre psychological cinema.

In *Human Monsters*, Turner and Price zero in on what makes a great villain, both male and female. Inspired by Vincent Price's one-man show *The Villains Still Pursue Me*, which is published here for the first time in its entirety as the Afterword, the 65 films essayed by Turner and Price could be called Son of Forgotten Horrors. But there's one catch. This time out, Turner and Price have chosen to focus on major studio films as well as Poverty Row and foreign entries. While most of these films are titles that many readers would not be familiar with, there are more than a baker's dozen of classic horrors such as *Svengali* (Warner Brothers, 1931), *The Old Dark House* (Universal, 1932), *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (MGM, 1932), *The Black Cat* (Universal, 1934), *The Mystery Of Edwin Drood* (Universal, 1935), *Mark Of The Vampire* (MGM, 1935), *The Walking Dead* (Warner Brothers, 1936), *Dark Eyes Of London* a.k.a. *The Human Monster* (Monogram, 1940) starring *Cult Movies*'s favorite Bela Lugosi, *The Mad Doctor* (Paramount, 1941), *The Leopard Man* (RKO, 1943), *The Mad Ghoul* (Universal, 1943), *Bluebeard* (PRC, 1944), *The Soul Of A Monster* (Columbia, 1944), and *Dragonwyck* (20th Century-Fox, 1946).

You get illuminating critiques on forgotten films like *The Hatchet Man* (First National/Vitaphone/Warner Brothers, 1932) starring Edward G. Robinson, *Behind The Mask* (Columbia, 1932) starring Edward Van Sloan and a post-Frankensteen Boris Karloff, *The Love Captive* (Universal, 1934), *Trouble For Two* (MGM, 1936), *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head* (Universal, 1934), and *Let 'Em Have It* (Reliance Pictures, 1935), to name just a few?

Turner and Price take us on a journey where few film historians have gone before. As with their previous release, *Forgotten Horrors* (a title which many popular video companies use to categorize their Poverty Row releases), they have unearthed a huge catalog of films that were neglected in their time. There's no doubt that a good amount of these forgotten cinematic treasures could be hard to locate at your local Blockbuster video store, but the great thing about this book is it inspires video companies and fans alike to begin seeking out and rediscovering these film treasures from long ago. Turner and Price have chosen to synopsise as well as write lively

critiques, and they provide the most comprehensive cast and crew listings of any books this reviewer has seen in recent years.

The reading is easy and informative, and while there are some typos which mostly involve dates (no fault of the authors), this should not deter any serious film student from including this wonderfully illustrated book in his or her library.

This is the stuff that dreams are made of — or should I say, *Human Monsters* are made of. While we live in a world of psychopaths and all too real human monsters, it's nice that George Turner and Michael Price have seen fit to give us some quiet reading about the bizarre psychology of movie villains. This book is an absolute jewel. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Jan Alan Henderson

A Thousand Faces by Michael F. Blake (Vestal Press \$29.95 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback).

When you are the world's preeminent Chaney mavin who has discovered a new treasure trove of previously unavailable material after you published your biography (*Lon Chaney: The Man Behind The Thousand Faces*, Vestal Press \$29.95 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback), what do you do? You forge ahead and write another book. This time, focusing on Chaney the actor, Blake — who has probably seen more Chaney films more often than anyone in shoe leather — has given us *A Thousand Faces: Lon Chaney's Unique Artistry in Motion Pictures* (Vestal Press: \$29.95 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback).

From the Western two-reeler, *By The Sun's Rays* (1914) through the sound version of *The Unholy Three* (1930), Blake analyzes Chaney's performances in film after film and places them within the context of his overall career.

Certainly we come away from these chapters with a deeper appreciation for Chaney's unique artistry. But thanks to Blake having met relatives of Chaney's business manager, Alfred Grasso, who shared pertinent material heretofore buried in long-dormant files, we see how insightful Chaney was about his career and his craft.

Perhaps the most significant example centers around *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*. For over 70 years, Irving Thalberg has been credited with the inspiration of turning the Victor Hugo novel into the successful Universal movie. And while "it was Thalberg," Blake writes, "who convinced Carl Laemmle to undertake the lavish and extravagant project," the idea itself had "come from Lon, not from Thalberg." (Blake also shows us a telegram from the Grasso collection indicating that Chaney was instrumental in bringing *Phantom* to the screen as well.)

One of the great gifts of the second volume is that Blake was able to interview at length Willard Sheldon, who was script supervisor on three of Chaney's movies. Sheldon, who is a recipient of the Frank Capra Lifetime Achievement Award given by the Directors Guild of America to assistant director and unit production managers, was one of the few people allowed to watch Lon apply his make-up. Sheldon's recollections of working with Chaney on *Mr. Wu* are fascinating — especially his descriptions regarding Chaney's make-up for "the old Chinese," and how the actor tested it out in public.

Even if Blake's text were not as overflowing with information as it is, this second book could thrill any Chaney fan by the new illustrations alone, including many stills from scenes that were deleted from released films. And because many Chaney movies have no extant prints and many others have a great deal of missing footage, Blake does a detective's work of piecing elements together for us. He supplies a cutting continuity script for us (an invaluable resource

film historians use through which they can put together what was intended for films in which footage was later lost) for the healing sequence in *The Miracle Man* (1919).

If he did nothing else, Michael Blake would make me want to throw my arms around him for his meticulous citing of sources. You know its okay to just sit back, relax and trust that when this biographer states something, there is always footnoted verification. He's also great about giving us background pieces of Old Hollywood history (including street addresses), which give the Chaney saga the right gestalt.

Cecil B. DeMille once called Lon Chaney a "sincere artist and a splendid gentleman." Michael Blake is a sincere author and splendid gentleman who has done his idol proud in two volumes, one as indispensable as the other. They left me thinking about the song from *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, "Lon Chaney's Gonna Get You If You Don't Watch Out" — to which I can only say, "Oh, I hope so!!!"

Reviewed by Lisa Mitchell

Robert Clarke To "B" Or Not To "B", A Film Actors Odyssey by Robert Clarke & Tom Weaver (\$23.00 postpaid, Midnight Marquee Press, Inc. 9721 Brittain Lane, Baltimore, Maryland 21234. phone: 410-665-1198, Fax: 410-665-9207)

To "B" Or Not To "B" is the title of Robert Clarke's memoir co-authored with Tom Weaver. It was recently published by Midnight Marquee Press, Inc.

Robert Clarke appeared in 76 films and worked in a great deal of television shows between 1944 and 1965. Though he managed to make a living, he never quite became a well known player. He did get better parts in "B" movies than in the "A" features that he managed to get work in.

He is well known to cult movie fans because of his appearances in grade Z science fiction movies like *The Astounding She Monster*, *The Incredible Petrified World*, *Hideoous Sun Demon*, and *Beyond The Time Barrier* (the latter two were also produced by him). His best credit in that genre was Edgar Ulmer's *The Man From Planet X*. Clarke also had bit parts in *Zombies On Broadway* and *Genius At Work* both with Bela Lugosi, *Bedlam* and *Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome* both with Boris Karloff, and *The Body Snatcher* with Karloff and Lugosi.

Clarke's autobiography is lively and interesting. He writes entertainingly about his many experiences as an actor. His anecdotes about some of the people he worked with are in the category of revealing never before known happenings of celebrities. Surprisingly negative comments about George "Gabby" Hayes and Angie Dickinson come up as well as complimentary views on the hard-working, down-to-earth, straightforward people such as John Wayne and Boris Karloff.

He does tell stories about the many horror stars that he worked with over the years. In addition to Karloff and Lugosi, Clarke worked with Vincent Price, Lon Chaney, Peter Lorre and John Carradine. So, for that alone, the book is worth buying for Cult Movies readers.

One comment Clarke made, early in the book, somehow comparing himself to the young Robert Taylor, is a comparison I disagree with. In looks and style he seems more closer to Robert Vaughn.

It's hard to remember anything he did in the few movies that I've seen him in, however I feel more sympathetic to his struggle after reading his well written book. A book that I would recommend to any film buffs of that era. The ups and downs of a career in Hollywood are very well represented in Robert Clarke's fast reading book.

Reviewed by Al R.

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Reviews

(continued from page 19)

the film harks back to days of more wholesome adventure fantasy. It is a glorious evocation of the passions of 1930s boyhood, from radio serials to comic strips like *Buck Rogers*. It's almost impossible to view the film and not think back on premiums, broadsheet comic strips in striking four colors, and the persistent optimism of a still-young country. *The Rocketeer* manages to capture the freewheeling spirit of a much gentler time, and best of all, it is a *fun* picture. It's a sad commentary on contemporary taste — especially contemporary genre taste — that a delightful film like *The Rocketeer* sinks without a trace the same summer science fiction and fantasy fans line up around the block to see such negative, depressing garbage as *Terminator II*. Hopefully, video will give a new lease on life to this little-seen treasure, and lead to a whole new generation of Rocketeer fans.

The Rocketeer is the ultimate comic book movie.
Reviewed by Bob Madison

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Walt Disney Home Video, 1983. Starring: Jason Robards, Jonathan Pryce, Royal Dano and Pam Grier. Screenplay by Ray Bradbury. Directed by Jack Clayton.

A frustrating and ultimately rewarding adaptation of a Ray Bradbury masterpiece.

Frustrating because no film adaptation, even scripted by Bradbury himself, can capture the pleasures of his prose. The setbacks of this adaptation are inherent in the limitations of the medium itself: no film, no matter how accomplished, can ever be as rich and rewarding as a novel. Bradbury's novel, one of the finest books produced in the second half of this century, is simply too big, and its spirit too encompassing, to be contained in a film.

Perhaps sensing this, Bradbury's screenplay introduces new characters and rethinks existing ones, to make his dark allegory work as a movie. The principals in the cast work hard, and under Jack Clayton's moody and understated direction, manage to bring a real Bradbury touch to the proceedings.

Something Wicked is a rewarding experience if the viewer can forget (or has never read), Bradbury's book.

Briefly, an evil carnival comes to Green Town, Illinois, one autumn in the late 1920s. Tom Fury, a lighting rod salesman, has arrived just before the storm and the carnival, a warning of the dark powers to come. Led by the vampirish Mr. Dark, the denizens of the carnival feed on the emotional pain of the town's inhabitants, granting their deepest wishes at a terrible price.

Two boys, Jim Nightshade and Will Halloway, learn the carnival's supernatural secrets, and soon must be rescued by Will's elderly father, Charles. Dark plays on Charles's deep regrets and longings, endangering the lives of the children and hoping to add the older man's soul to his collection.

It would be hard to think of a literary adaptation, save for some of the classic films of the 1930s like *David Copperfield*, so perfectly cast. Jason Robards was born to play Charles Halloway, Bradbury's Everyman hero. While obviously

slowed by middle-age, Robards' Halloway seems a confused child: someone basically good who has lost his emotional equilibrium. His pain and longing are all too visible to the viewer; Robards' performance is of a caliber little seen in genre films.

Jonathan Pryce makes a magnificent Mr. Dark. It would have been all too easy to cast a horror film icon in the role, and reduce the part to bottled menace. Such a wooden player as Christopher Lee would have been completely incapable of the theatrical and textured performance of Pryce. Pryce is equal to the challenge of the poetry of Bradbury's dialogue, and he manages to infuse the words with an energy and menace beyond the range of most actors. He is terrific.

The contrasting styles of Robards' naturalism and Pryce's melodrama give their scenes together real bite. It is in their exchanges that Bradbury best captures the spirit of his novel, and remain the standout scenes in the picture.

But perhaps best of all is Royal Dano as Tom Fury, the lightning rod salesman. What could have been a thankless, throwaway role to most actors, becomes in his playing a performance to savor. It is the perfect melding of actor and character, and like W.C. Fields and Dickens' Mr. Micawber, it is now impossible to read the character without seeing Dano. Indeed, it is only Dano's performance that has any period feel. While the magnificent Green Town set has a delightful 1920s look evocative of Norman Rockwell, most of the performances are too contemporary in tone. But Dano seems a Middle America character of another, simpler, time.

The final reel of the film is special effects heavy, but never too much to rob the story of its human element. Rather, things like illuminating book pages and lightning bolts running through a ghostly merry-go-round, become gravy to dress up the action. To his credit, Clayton never lets the actors get lost in the effects.

A critical and box-office disaster when released, it is time for *Something Wicked This Way Comes* to be rediscovered on video. The lesson of Bradbury's book and film is the importance of high spirits. Dark and his minions feed on grief, misery and regret. Bradbury tells us that the only way to happiness is happiness, and that negative emotion can eat away at us like a cancer.

A good lesson to remember in these *Strange Days*.

Reviewed by Bob Madison

Shatterdead

(1993, 84 minutes) With Stark Raven, Flora Fauna, Marina Del Rey and Daniel "Smalls" Johnson. Written and directed by Scooter MacRae. Available from Tempe Video.

This well-made, shot-on-video feature injects some much-needed original creativity into a tired sub-genre (*Night Of The Living Dead*-style zombie movies) which badly needs it.

The opening shot is an astonishingly well-lit and well-staged scene of a woman being raped by an Angel. Writer/director MacRae doesn't waste any time with lengthy exposition or explanations; with this one image we see that this is something radically and chillingly different than the average walking dead film. No phony voodoo or pseudoscientific explanation for why the dead are rising. The reason here is clearly theological. God is sick

of us and the mess we've made of things, so he has abandoned us. Another big difference is that the walking dead people are cognizant, lucid and often sympathetic.

Our heroine Susan (Stark Raven) is still alive. She cruises the streets with gun in hand and mirror ready, trying just to stay alive (the mirror she uses to test whether people are alive or not. She holds it under their noses and checks for breathing). She had her car stolen by a group of zombies led by a mad preacher. Then, on foot, she runs into a group of dead people who want to go on as though they are still alive without hassles. At first she believes them to be alive, and so stays with them for a while. They are led by Grandma (Marina Del Rey), the attractive young woman we saw at the beginning being raped by the angel. She is now pregnant. When her belly is blasted open with a shotgun by a group of barbaric dead people, she gives Caesarean birth to an undead fetus. She raises the child to her bloody breast in a truly chilling scene.

Eventually Susan returns home to find that her boyfriend Dan (Daniel "Smalls" Johnson) has killed himself in despair. Since the blood no longer flows in his veins, he is now unable to achieve erection. Susan straps a gun to his naked loins and they go at it. There is actually a graphic scene of pistol penetration (though somewhat obscured by overlapping superimpositions). I won't give away the ending, but it is at once nihilistic and optimistic, and it is quite effective.

The photography, though on video, is slick. The make-up effects (by *Redneck Zombies* auteur Pericles Lewnes) are, for the most part, effective (and very graphic). The performances are adequate, though nobody really soars.

MacRae's script is original, but could be more controlled. At times I wondered what the motivations were for some of the character's incongruous actions. The best thing about it, however, is that we begin to question why Susan is clinging so desperately to a transient life when the living dead seem to be just as human and vulnerable as she. It's like she's clinging to an unquestioned tradition of the past which has long ago lost its significance. Very often the zombies are depicted much more sympathetically than this stone-faced, gun-packing rebel.

But it is as a director that MacRae's considerable talents show the most. He offers up one original image after another, usually beautifully rendered on a budget, one more disturbing than the last. I was also impressed with the way he handles the plentiful nudity of males and females. I didn't get a sense of leering (as is so often the case in these home-grown movies), but merely an honest and unashamed frankness.

I simply can't get the picture out of my head. This is the debut of an extraordinary horror filmmaker. Somebody give him some money right away so that he can move on to film productions.

Reviewed by Ron Ford

King of the Carnival

(Republic serial, 1955) With Harry Lauter, Fran Bennett, Keith Richards, Robert Shayne. 12 chapters. From Republic Home Video.

If, like me, you're a fan of the Republic serials, you occasionally suffer a twinge of regret that they didn't make a few more of them during their "Golden Age" (the late 1930s through the mid-

40s) — and maybe a few less of them after that. It doesn't matter how low your expectations are when you watch for the first time a Republic serial from the 1950s — you're always disappointed. *King of the Carnival*, the 66th and last Republic serial, is no exception. The new action (outdoor fistfights, fistfights in rooms with few or no props, gunfights where no one is ever hit) are as unexciting as the dialogue scenes, and the plotting is infantile. The use of stock action footage from older serials doesn't liven things up, it just makes you wish you were watching that serial instead. Even at \$19.95 (the new price for Republic Entertainment serials), I felt as though I'd been burned.

The baddies in *King of the Carnival* are a gang of counterfeiters: A mystery boss operating out of a circus, a Russian-accented foreign agent (Gregory Gay) running the press in the water-tight cabin of a sunken ship on the ocean floor, and a pair of circus riggers (Keith Richards and Terry Frost) who do all the errands, dirty work, fighting, etc. Clues lead treasury agent Rick Vallin to the circus where he bumps into an old war buddy, trapeze artist Harry Lauter, and asks him to take over the case. For no reason that's made clear, Lauter and his aerialist partner Fran Bennett take on the assignment in their spare time; Lauter chases around after Richards and Frost, wearing whatever clothes and costumes are required to match the actors in the old clips that are used for the cliffhangers.

The best that you can hope for in a serial from this era is for it to be funny in spots, and *King of the*

Carnival occasionally comes through in that department. Trips back and forth between the shoreline and the sunken ship are made by the actors who don aqualungs and walk on the ocean floor; not one of them ever bothers to remove any of their clothes except perhaps a sportcoat. (With all that "funny money" floating around, you'd think that some of these people would spring for swimming trunks!) In an early chapter, Lauter starts shooting at Richards and Frost when he doesn't even know if they're bad guys or not; later in the serial, some guards do the same thing. How much counterfeit money could a circus with a 25¢ admission hope to pass? (Is Gregory Gay out there printing up phony one-dollar bills?) Even though Rick Vallin continually stresses that the counterfeiters can destroy the American economic system (Europe is being flooded with the baddies' queer money), he's content to drop the case in the lap of a trapeze artist and retreat to his office. The mystery villain is climactically killed in a short feet-first fall. A more serious flaw is the fact that there aren't enough "red herrings" to keep audiences guessing as to the identity of the master criminal—an important part of the fun in older, better serials (*Captain Marvel*, *Zorro's Fighting Legion*, *The Fighting Devil Dogs*, *Dick Tracy vs. Crime, Inc.*, etc.)

On the "plus" side, Robert Clarke and Stuart Whitman have little supporting parts as a T-man and a trapeze artist, respectively, the geriatric Eddie Parker turns up in a bit as a rigger and Harry

Lauter seems to do a great deal of his own fistfighting, which is an asset. (Stuntman Tom Steele, who usually doubled for the heroes in these latter-day serials, had gotten to the point where he obviously didn't like to fall down in fights anymore.)

King of the Carnival like too many of the later Republics, lacks the vigor, ingenuity and production finesse of the serial greats. For 167 minutes, the heroes and baddies take turns holding the "upper hand," and the senseless, repetitious proceedings often have a "kids-at-play" feeling. One of the few good things about it is that it did put me in the mood to watch a vintage serial — one that would get the taste of *King of the Carnival* out of my mouth.

Reviewed by Tom Weaver

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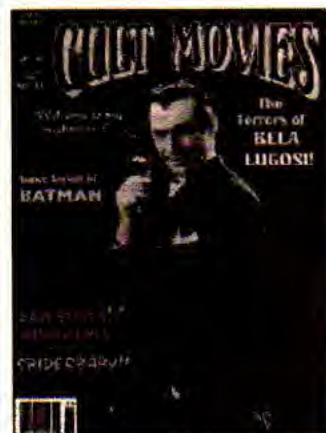
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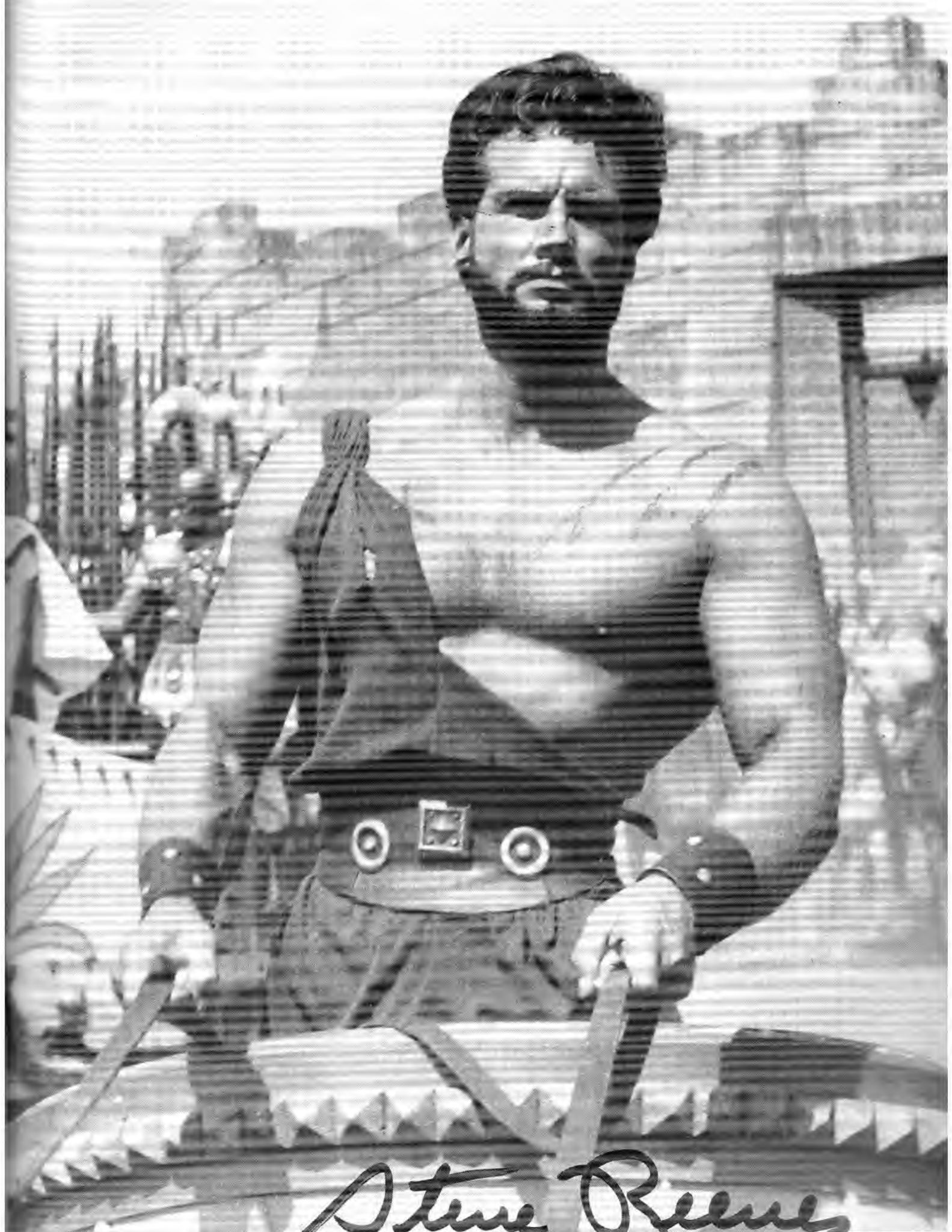
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